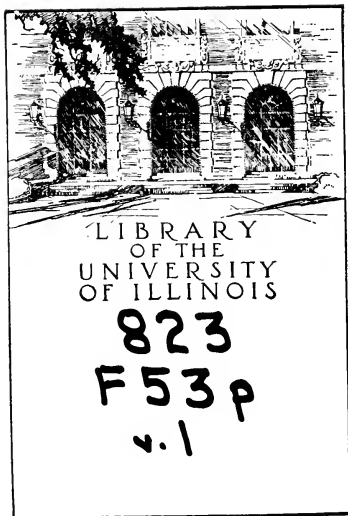




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"Amia" Wm. Fisher









# THE PETREL:

A TALE OF THE SEA.

BY

A NAVAL OFFICER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

- VOL. I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

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1850.

LONDON:  
PRINTED BY HARRISON AND SON,  
ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

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# THE PETREL;

OR,

## LOVE ON THE OCEAN.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE little Petrel had been suddenly dispatched by the Commodore of a cruising squadron in the Indian Ocean, to search the Mozambique Channel, and the Archipelago to the northward of it, for pirates, a vague rumour having reached that officer of vessels plundered and crews maltreated in those seas; and, though disbelieving the report, he felt it his duty to consider that our outward-bound East Indiamen frequently took that route,

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which circumstance being generally known, offered a powerful temptation to marauders. Our little Petrel, therefore, towards the close of a cruize of many months' duration, was hastily completed with old salt provisions and stale remainder biscuit from the larger ships of the squadron, it being presumed that water and fresh provisions, of both of which she stood in great need, might be readily procured in many parts of her extensive route.

Little is known to the general reader of the difficulties and sufferings to which our small cruizers have been too frequently exposed in remote barbarous and often unknown regions, when reduced to wretchedly scanty rations of bad and unwholesome water, under a burning sun, aggravated by a diet of stale rancid salt meat, many years casked up, and flinty honey-combed biscuit, swarming with, and deeply tainted by, maggots and weevils.

The Petrels started cheerfully for their new destination; it promised interesting occupa-

tion, and they were to be clear of senior officers,—great naval luxuries both; and they flattered themselves that there would be very soon no more short allowance; their only apprehension was that they should find no pirates to contend with: such rumours were but too common.

Having made the east coast of Africa, to the north of the Cape Colony, they had been disappointed in two attempts to procure fresh water, the want of which was now severely felt, and they were running along the coast towards the Mozambique Channel, anxiously looking out for a river's mouth, or for some spot which might afford good landing for boats, with a chance of finding fresh water; but it was a season of unusual drought.

“This huge barrier of bare precipitous rocks, Mr. Herbert, so gloomy and so inaccessible,” observed Captain Daunton, to his young First Lieutenant, “would appear to be interminable.”

"I am heartily tired of looking at them, sir," replied Herbert. "They come down to the very water's edge, and often overhang it; but there must be outlets for the floods of the rainy season somewhere. 'Tis a pity that we have no charts of this coast worth one straw."

"It is incomprehensible to me, I confess, that our ships of war should not be supplied with charts," rejoined Daunton thoughtfully.

The Captain had now lost all inclination for talking, and continued to walk up and down the quarter-deck moodily, chewing the cud upon this strange and disagreeable subject of want of charts, which, whilst it added heavily to his responsibilities, really compromised the safety of the ship, and of course the important duties she was expected to perform.

Herbert stood on the gangway viewing with impatience those horrid cliffs which barred them from all access to the shore.

"Why is it, Mr. Herbert," said a remarkably handsome young Midshipman at his

elbow, "that a heavy surf breaks at the foot of these cliffs for miles, as it now does abreast of us, and then again the sea becomes smooth for hours, without any apparent cause for such a change?"

"It is, Darby," replied Herbert, who always encouraged such questions from the youngsters, "because the coast just here lies exposed to the regular swell of the ocean, but after having trended gradually, though almost imperceptibly, to the westward for a considerable distance, it becomes sheltered from the regular swell, which forms this surf; till, after a time, resuming its former direction, the swell again breaks upon the rocks. Look at your compass, Darby, now and then."

"You must keep your lead going," observed the Captain. "We are very near the shore."

"We do, sir," replied Mr. Marliner, the Master, "though it is little better than a useless form; for there is sometimes a hundred

fathoms of water alongside the coral reefs. Our best dependence rests upon the clearness of the water, and a good look out from aloft."

"Keep a sharp look out for discoloured water," exclaimed Captain Daunton, to the man at the mast-head. Then resuming, "this is all very well, Mr. Marliner, on a bright clear day, when in such transparent water a coral reef may be distinguished from aloft at some little distance ; but it is of little use in dull weather, Mr. Marliner, and of no use at all at night."

"Quite true, sir ; and this is a queer sort of a vessel to take the ground with, drawing so little water forward, and so much abaft, and so sharp as she is ; and yet, if a ship goes on gently, and the water is smooth, there are worse places to ground upon than a coral reef, the surface of which will break down under her, to a certain extent."

"That's all very well, Mr. Marliner, but



look at our tant masts, and top hamper, and this heavy tier of guns: we must keep her afloat."

"I trust we shall, sir," replied the Master.

"Look, sir, at our poor fellows;" said Herbert, "with their pale faces, and parched lips, how they eye these horrid cliffs, as we pass along them, prying into every chasm, in the hope of discovering some watercourse, or at least some spot where the cliffs, receding from the sea, might leave a comparatively level space, to give us a chance of finding a small supply. It is only sailors and wanderers of the desert who comprehend the full value of the precious fluid."

Still, hour after hour as they glided on, nothing could be seen, but that rocky wall in its dark and sterile monotony; their very souls were weary of it.

At length, when hope was almost dead within them, and some of the old seamen had begun to fancy there was a spell upon the

ship, and to talk of the Flying Dutchman, a cry of *Water! Water!!* was heard. Every eye was instantaneously fixed upon a point of the cliff just opening to view, and twenty outstretched arms were at once directed towards it.

A host of worn and sickly faces cast off at once the gloom of despondency to become radiant with delight; for, as the ship advanced, a beautiful waterfall was distinctly seen gushing from a chasm high up in the cliff, and glittering in the bright sunshine, as it expanded into a broad sheet of the purest water, lavishing its inestimable treasures upon a narrow strip of low bare rugged rocks, which, for several hundred yards, formed a sort of beach between the sea and the slightly receding cliff.

It was a glorious sight, that foaming and sparkling cascade, and the luxury of unmeasured draughts of pure, cool, limpid water, seemed now within their reach.

The ship was steered for the spot, and every telescope was fixed upon that narrow strip of beach, upon which the water came pouring down in such rich abundance.

But the countenance of Captain Daunton, bronzed by long exposure, stamped with well-defined lines, expressive of prudence and resolution, tempered by long and severe experience, though for a moment like all the others, it had brightened with hope and joy; now, as he withdrew his telescope, expressed nothing short of bitter disappointment; and, as they were approaching very near the shore, cautiously, and with no more canvas than was necessary to keep the ship fully under command, he turned to the First Lieutenant, who had followed his movements with equal symptoms of mortification, and shrugging his shoulders,—

“Lay the ship’s head off shore, Mr. Herbert,” he said. “We are quite near enough for an accurate examination, and we will take our

time to examine it thoroughly, though I see but too clearly that it will be impossible for a boat to land here. Look at the surf upon that foam-covered line of sharp and rugged rocks, just above the surface. It occupies the whole interval from bluff to bluff; from the spot where the cliff first begins to recede, to where it becomes once more the inaccessible barrier, which has so long baffled us; the surf upon it shows no opening."

Herbert obeyed in silence; but his intelligent countenance spoke volumes, and its expression was contagious; officers and men looked at each other in despondency, and dismay. In vain was the tantalising strip of crags minutely examined by the piercing eyes of so many anxious and experienced mariners; all felt the same painful conviction, that there was no opening in the reef, no interval in the surf, no possibility of landing.

"Permit me, sir, to take a couple of boats," said Herbert, "that I may examine the reef more closely."

“Do so,” replied the Captain, “and take Mr. Marliner with you to sound between the ship and the shore. I have no hope of your success in any attempt to land here, but I will not throw away the shadow of a chance, and our poor fellows ought to see, and feel, the utter impossibility of getting at that water, which looks so tempting and flows so freely.”

Some few sanguine and less experienced persons still entertained hopes of success, the more experienced had lost all hope, and the expression of Herbert's face, as he returned on board, would have been an amply sufficient report of failure.

“No possibility of landing, sir,” he said, “and the soundings show so rough and rocky a bottom throughout, that it would have been madness to anchor, as any cable would be ruined in a few hours.”

The boats were hoisted up, and the Petrel resumed her weary way, along a coast still

possessing the same harsh and disheartening aspect.

Doubly nauseous to the parched palates of the brave Petrels, was their scanty ration of the dark, muddy, unpalatable substitute for pure water, which they that day received : it was difficult to determine, whether its deficiency in quantity, or its disgusting and delirious quality, constituted the greater evil, and that too, whilst a broad bright stream was running to waste before their eyes, as if in mockery of their sufferings. A more favourable curve of the coast, or a small opening in that vexatious reef of rocks, would have made it available to them, as a source of health, strength, and enjoyment ; but they were doomed to suffer still.

Captain Daunton observing the general despondency, addressed his First Lieutenant aloud :

“ That abominable waterfall was provoking enough Mr. Herbert, but it proves clearly that

there is abundance of water at the back of those detestable cliffs ; and I feel certain, that within a few hours, we shall fall in with a river, or watercourse. I shall lay the ship to at sunset, lest we should pass it in the dark."

"There can now be no doubt of it, sir," replied Herbert, assuming a cheerful tone, "and as the land has been for some time trending to the westward rather sharply, it will soon give us the advantage of smooth water, and then we can secure an ample supply, even if there should be a reef to contend with."

Nor were these remarks without some cheering influence upon those to whom they were indirectly addressed.

In these regions there is little twilight, the piercing rays which have dazzled and oppressed every living creature opposed to them for twelve hours, strike almost as fiercely even when the sun approaches the horizon, as at mid-

day, but the instant it disappears, it is night. And lovely are those tropical nights! The moon though far more radiant and beautiful than with us, still preserves her characteristic softness; but fascinating as they are to imaginative persons, those mild bright moon rays are very baneful, and it is dangerous to sleep exposed to them. Fish or flesh speedily become putrid under their influence, and the former certainly imbibes a poisonous quality under a bright moon, even whilst it yet remains free from putridity, if long exposed to her rays.

“The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night,” saith the Psalmist, and often do Scripture phrases, true to nature, flash sudden conviction upon the mind of the contemplative wanderer in wild and savage regions. In the absence of the moon, the stars shine out with a lustre and brilliancy unknown to our grosser atmosphere. These lovely nights are the season of revelry throughout all Negroland. In populous districts they



are passed by the natives in dancing to their strangely discordant music amidst shouts of laughter ; the whole throng displaying in a thousand rude ways, that inextinguishable devotion to mirth and merriment, which slavery itself can repress in the negro, only during the very hour of toil or of suffering.

On such a night, the Petrel was hauled off to a reasonable distance from the shore, to maintain her position under easy sail, till daylight should enable her to resume her tedious task.

These rocky cliffs abounded with huge projections, some of them springing up like lofty towers and battlements, shattered by age or violence ; often they were perched upon the verge of a precipice, or the summit of a conspicuous elevation, whilst others in forms equally strange and fantastic, overhung the sea. One of the most remarkable of these, the very image of a dilapidated tower had been set by compass at nightfall, as the point from

which they were to recommence their dreary course in the morning. Splendid as was that soft bright African night, amidst scarcely rippled waters, glittering with starshine, its beauties were as much lost upon our weary, thirsty mariners, still acutely feeling their recent disappointment, as were the rich out-pourings of that delusive waterfall, upon the sterile and inhospitable crags, which had rendered it inaccessible. Visions of this foaming cataract, haunted their feverish and unrefreshing sleep; rivers of living waters flowed swiftly past them in their dreams, mocking every effort to reach them.

It was a long, long night, but daylight came at last, and again the Petrel ran along that detestable coast, as near it as was possible to do with safety, for the western curve of the coast had continued, and the surf no longer broke upon the rocks; a circumstance, which, though advantageous, had led to a great increase in the number and extent of the coral

reefs connected with the shore, calling for additional precautions.

“I think, sir,” observed Herbert to the Captain, “we shall find water to-day, and as there is no surf on the shore, our boats will now experience no difficulty in landing.”

Preparations for anchoring, and for watering the ship, were now somewhat ostentatiously commenced; the look-out men aloft were called upon for increased vigilance, both for ravines on shore, and coral reefs in their route. This move which showed confidence in the officers, was cheering to the men, and the work was carried on with great alacrity.

“Reef a-head!” exclaimed the look-out man aloft, but before they could haul the ship’s head sufficiently off shore, the rocks were distinctly seen beneath her bottom and around her. There had been no want of vigilance, yet had they had a narrow escape from being wrecked, but she shot into deep water without touching, and they soon resumed

their course along the cliffs, which had become more broken, whilst the forms they assumed were more wild and fantastic.

But still the morning wore away without any farther change, save only that as the coral reefs became more frequent and more extensive, they were often obliged to haul off from the land to avoid them, and not seldom with considerable risk to the ship.

Noon came, more hot, more close, more oppressive, than ever. The ship's company, summoned by the shrill winding of all the boatswain's calls in concert, descended to dinner rather in compliance with habit than from any appetite for their salt junk. The grievous disappointment of yesterday was still severely felt. The half-hour bell struck, and the well-known cry of "Grog ho!" followed a single blast of the boatswain's call. This once enlivening summons, announcing the distribution of the seamen's favourite ration, their grog, the great solace of their fatigues

and privations, ever received with a merry laugh in ordinary times, and whilst as a man from each mess hastened up with his can a running fire of sea-jokes and nautical witticisms was wont to flash from all quarters ; —but it was not so now. Even this welcome task was listlessly performed, in gloomy silence. The heat was overpowering, and most of the crew were suffering more or less from feverish symptoms. Nowhere is the sympathy between body and mind more obvious than at sea. The intelligent officer knows this and acts upon it.

“A wide gap in the cliff!” was at length the joyful cry of the man at the mast-head ; every telescope, every eye, was instantaneously turned towards the extreme point in view, which as they were close in-shore, and the land curved inward, was not very distant.

“A ravine !” exclaimed the delighted Captain, “a wide breach in that horrible rampart! —it cannot but be a watercourse ; God be praised !”

All this had passed in an instant, yet was every man already on deck, and at his post too; for well did our hardy long-trained Petrels know what would follow.

“Mr. Herbert,” said the Captain, “there must be water here, and as we are sheltered from the swell, it must be, to a certain extent, attainable; but I have great doubt of finding anchorage, which will make watering the ship a slow and difficult task.”

“The land is opening more, sir,” replied Herbert, “and the ravine is not very wide. It must be the bed of a great torrent in the wet season, where the rains are so heavy, and the outlets for water so few.”

“There lies my hope of an anchorage,” said Daunton, “for such torrents bring down vast accumulations of sand and gravel, which in time fill up and level the rocky bottom. Abreast of that ravine, therefore, I hope to find anchorage.”

“There is good landing at any rate,” said the Master.

"I am glad to see you on deck, Mr. Anstey," said the Captain, addressing the Second Lieutenant, who had for some weeks been laid up with rheumatic fever.

Mr. Anstey, who was an excellent young man, though of a constitution somewhat too delicate for his profession, bowed.

"I am anxious, sir," he said, "to take such duty as I am equal to, now that I am convalescent; and Mr. Danvers thinks I may safely superintend the work on board, whilst Mr. Herbert will be more actively employed."

The ship was now laid to with her head off shore, and the boats were lowered.

"Take two boats to the shore, Herbert," said the Captain, "with small casks, to forward us an immediate supply of water by one of the boats, that we may serve it out as quickly as possible to the ship's company, whilst you are filling casks for the other boat, and looking into the country beyond the ravine, (for we see nothing of it from hence), it is im-

portant to know whether we shall find fire-wood, for we are greatly in want of it. Let me see you again, as soon as you have satisfied yourself upon these most important points; and lose not an instant in sending us water for immediate use. Mast-head, there," he added, "do you see any discoloured water between us and the shore?"

"A large white patch in front of the ravine, sir."

"That's the very thing I hoped for. Go, Mr. Marliner, and if, as I expect, you find anchorage, raise a cap upon the loom of an oar, whilst you examine it carefully, and we will be ready to run for it as soon as you return to take the ship in. I fear it will fall calm before long, but luckily the transparency of the water will save you a world of sounding."

In a quarter of an hour the signal was made that anchorage had been found; this, on so rocky a shore, had been a very doubtful point, though of extreme importance, for on a



rocky, uneven bottom hempen cables are never to be depended upon for an hour, and as yet iron cables were not.

“ They are carrying down water to the cutter, sir,” reported Mr. Anstey, “ and the Master, is returning.”

“ There is a bank of hard white sand, sir,” reported Mr. Marliner, “ about two cables in length, and as much in breadth, for it forms an irregular square, surrounded in all directions by rugged, dark coloured rocks. The general depth upon the bank is about six fathoms ; we must lay our anchor as nearly as we can in the centre of it. I can’t call it a safe anchorage, but in this season, when we have nothing worse to look for than a strong sea-breeze, I see no great risk in it. We shall have an uphill drag.”

“ I am too happy to have such an anchorage, Mr. Marliner, for though it may be nothing more than a thin coat of hard sand over sharp rocks, which is the worst of holding-ground,

it will preserve our cables from being cut. The Spaniards, whose Mediterranean coast is wretchedly deficient in harbourage, boast of three good harbours there,—June, July, and Carthagina,—and upon this principle we will anchor here.”

There was fortunately breeze enough to run the ship in ; and she was soon lying at anchor, with sails furled and yards squared.

“ The cutter with water, sir,” reported Mr. Anstey.

“ All hands to water !” was joyfully piped, and lightly did every heart beat at the welcome sound. Each man took his unstinted draught of the cool, clear precious liquid, and so grateful was it to the irritated palate, the parched throat, and the dry pale lips, that it absolutely appeared to diffuse itself perceptibly through the whole fevered frame ; so calming, so cooling, so tranquillising, and yet so exhilarating was that delicious draught ! but its effect defies description.

Years upon years have passed away, with their mingled joys and sorrows of no ordinary stamp, since we first enjoyed, under somewhat similar circumstances, the simple but ineffable luxury of unstinted draughts of pure cool water, after having long and severely suffered from privation. We are unable to describe the feelings of that moment, but the recollection is vividly impressed upon our memory for life.

'Twas a strange scene, that open unsheltered anchorage ; the small bank on which the Petrel lay, was a white field, surrounded by a rocky frame-work, the water so transparent that, though full forty feet deep, the dark anchor which lay in the centre looked like a toy in a crystal vase : one felt disposed to put out a hand, and take it up ; for the huge precipitous rocks which bounded the narrow ravine, were, or appeared to be, so close, that our little Petrel herself, with her low sharp hull, and her tall slender masts, tapering to a

point, appeared in comparison a mere skiff, a sort of fairy craft.

Herbert, with the Doctor, had started with an exploring party, to penetrate up the valley, the narrow gorge of which was evidently the bed of a mighty torrent, which half filled the valley in the rainy season, though it was now but a bright sparkling brook, babbling in its rapid course amongst rocks and stones, brought down by former floods.

The valley, as they advanced, extended considerably, but it nowhere exceeded half a mile in breadth, being bounded on both sides by steep and almost inaccessible precipices, singularly bare and rugged. The whole was barren in the extreme, though wherever the hills receded most, a soil had been formed, bearing detached thickets and groups of trees of considerable size.

The whole country was thickly strewn with stones and fragments of rock; but the most striking peculiarity of it was, that huge boul-

ders lay scattered in all directions, from the tops of the hills to the depths of the valley, wherever there was a level spot.

“Those trees yonder look as if they would suit me well,” said Herbert, “if I can only get the wood carried down to the boats, through such an abominable country as this.” And he was stepping forward to examine them.

“Stop,” said Danvers, emphatically, as he who was foremost at the moment, turned a sharp angle. The party, on looking up, beheld with astonishment, a little to the right of them, a magnificent precipice, like the half of a lofty hill just torn asunder in the midst, so rugged, so bare, so precipitous, was its aspect, whilst a huge detached rock, or boulder, on its very summit, overhung the edge of the precipice frightfully, without any visible support. It was far larger than any they had yet seen, and the marvel was, that it appeared as if more than half over the edge of the precipice, thus, as it were, air-borne. Herbert,

however, had little leisure for idle speculations. He soon directed three or four of the largest trees to be felled; and whilst this operation was going on, the Doctor examined some of the larger boulders near them.

“It is very strange,” observed Danvers, “but whilst some of these detached rocks have a surface covered with pointed projections and sharp angles, as if they had just been torn by some convulsion of the earth from the very bowels of the neighbouring hills, others,—this one for instance, which must weigh some tons,—has its surface smoothed down and rounded off, almost like a pebble on the sea-shore. One would think it must have been tossed and rolled about for ages upon ages. Only fancy an elementary strife which could whirl this huge rock backwards and forwards for years, like a dead leaf in a whirlwind!”

“I admire your philosophical remarks very much, Doctor,” said Herbert, “but you know I make no pretensions to philosophy, whatever

you and the Captain may do. Two philosophers are enough in one ship. What's your opinion upon that subject, Darby Darcie?"

"Faith, sir," replied our old acquaintance, who had been hardly able to withdraw his eyes for a moment from the imposing mass so wonderfully suspended on the other side of the narrow valley, "faith, sir, I don't very well know what a philosopher is, but this appears to me to be the devil's own country; and as for rolling them big stones about till they've got so smooth and round, might not his imps have been playing at marbles with them, and forgot to put some of them up in their bag when they had done wid them? I'm thinking, sir, 'twould take more than one of them same imps to hang that whopper up in the air yonder, that way. I shouldn't wonder if they were holding on to it now, and that's why it don't come rattling down!"

"Faith, Darby, I think your philosophy as good as another's; but the sun is getting low.

I see my way pretty well now for to-morrow's work; so down with one more tree; the wood seems to be solid enough. I'll just look at that clump a little further on, and then we'll return to the boats."

Danvers, meanwhile, poking about amongst some bushes, came upon a skeleton of some large animal, which he was of opinion had been killed and devoured by wild beasts.

"I have no doubt," said the Doctor musingly, as they picked their way over the rocky ground and detestable thorn-shrubs, towards the boat, "I have no doubt, Herbert, that after the rains, this barren-looking country would have a very different appearance; covered, probably, with verdure, and abounding with antelopes."

"Very likely; I only wish we had some of them here now! But here we are, and the last boat waiting for us. Come along, Mr. Darby: what are you up to?"

"Oh let me, please, have one more swig at



the running' strame ; it does me heart good to look at it."

Darby, who had scarcely a touch of brogue, unless when excited, had a way of larding his jokes, or his entreaties, with just so much of it as would give point or pathos, as the case might be, which, aided by a most prepossessing countenance, and a sweet rich voice, was in either case not a little effective.

They all adopted Darby's view of another swig at the running water, and once more feasted their eyes upon it.

Captain Daunton was walking the deck, expecting their return with considerable interest, and was highly gratified with Herbert's report about wood and water. As to the strange and disagreeable character of the country, which both Danvers and Herbert spoke of with detestation, he cared little about that.

" Well, Mr. Herbert," he said, " I shall hope to have a look at all these wonders to-

morrow ; but if the country gives us wood and water I shall be well satisfied with it. Did you see any trace of inhabitants, man or beast ?”

“None, sir, but one or two very small antelopes, though Danvers will tell you of a skeleton he found.”

“Well, well, the Doctor and I will talk over his discoveries, so make your arrangements for wooding and watering the ship as quickly as possible ; but remember, I will have no night-work. Come into the cabin, Doctor, and let us hear what you have to say.”

The labours of the day had now ceased, and as the sun had sunk gradually behind the lofty hills, the huge dark dismal shadows had stretched out farther and farther over the sea, till they had gradually enveloped the hull of the little ship. It appeared in the gloom as if the mighty cliffs had advanced and were still advancing upon her ; for the intervening space, which from their magnitude had from the first

seemed to be frightfully small, appeared now to have been almost annihilated.

The little Petrel, lost in those deep shadows, lay cowering at the very feet of the cliffs, and seemed almost to touch them, yet sweet and refreshing was the sleep of her toil-worn crew, that night.



## CHAPTER II.

THE midshipmen's berth in the Petrel was a close, dark cell, into which daylight had never penetrated, much less sunshine. Nearly as much might be said of fresh air, but not quite ; for during a fresh breeze, under favourable circumstances, a windsail from the hatchway had occasionally been coaxed into leading a current of air into it for a short time, but it was a rare event, and by night impossible ; for then several ranges of hammocks, each in its allotted breadth of fourteen inches, containing its living occupant, intervened, and as

the only light our Mids could obtain proceeded from a single tallow-candle, of the most ordinary description, this and other untoward circumstances rendered the atmosphere of the sub-marine palace unpleasant enough.

The length of the berth was eight feet, its extreme breadth six feet, though much less on its floor, as the side of the ship which formed its inner boundary rounded in considerably. Its height between the beams was five feet six inches, but those huge close-set oak beams sadly curtailed these proportions, for the thoughtless head was certain to come into rude contact with the sharp edges of the hard oaken beams, much more frequently than was agreeable.

The huge timbers which projected from the ship's side into the berth were very unsightly, but less inconvenient to the six inhabitants of this spacious dwelling ; who, moreover, turned them to some account, for by fixing a door between two of these timbers, they had gained

a sort of cupboard, of most irregular form, but which afforded protection to the few plates, dishes, cups, and other simple household gear, their stock of which was so small as to make breakage a serious evil.

A rough old deal table, with leaves too often broken, and legs ricketty from age and rough handling, with the addition of one old chair, constituted a suite of furniture worthy of the apartment, fixed lockers serving for store-rooms and seats.

There is nothing very tempting in this picture, yet were the inmates of the berth, at least the younger portion of them, as merry and joyous a set as you would wish to see ; a fresh annoyance or inconvenience was more often received with a shower of jokes than with regrets and complaints ; and good jokes or bad jokes they were sure to call forth peals of laughter with, or at, the perpetrator thereof, as the case might suggest.

Fun of all sorts was in high favour, and

here the captious or the fastidious, who plague themselves and others, might have learned to take a joke good humouredly, as well as many other lessons in practical philosophy highly useful in social life. Even hunger and thirst lost half their terrors where dainty fare was unknown, and the ordinary comforts of life only enjoyed from time to time, by fits and starts, which had the happy effect of promoting them to the local rank of luxuries, and of much valued luxuries too.

The working parties had landed at daylight, and all was soon going on briskly, under Herbert's active superintendence, when the Captain and Danvers, the Surgeon, stepped into the gig. They were both, as Herbert had hinted, philosophers in a small way, and dabblers in natural history. Danvers was by far the most scientific of the two, but the Captain, though in all other matters cool and judicious, was an enthusiast when fairly mounted upon his own particular hobby.

They first examined the sand-bank on which the ship was anchored.

“Really sir,” observed Danvers, “it is very interesting to behold so distinctly the bottom of the sea, and everything upon it, in such a depth of water, so perfectly is it transparent.”

“Yes,” replied his companion, “and this whole bank looks as if it was enclosed in a bronze frame; the only visible thing being our anchor, which, by-the-bye, merely lies on the surface of the hard sand, without biting, or taking any hold. It is but a thin covering of sand over the rocks. This would be no safe anchorage in a strong south-east wind, but our cable won’t chafe, and that is a great point.”

They then proceeded to a convenient landing place, upon a projecting shelf of rock, at some distance from the watering place. It was a sort of natural pier for light boats. The gig was sent off with orders to return



when the boat's crew had taken their breakfast.

Our two philosophers stood on the rock for some time, in deep admiration of the scene around them; on one side, huge dark precipitous rocks, without a vestige of vegetable or animal life; on the other, a sea of crystal, displaying, with all the advantage of contrast, a show of life and animation, the beauty and brilliancy of which called forth the admiration of the beholders.

"Observe, Doctor," said the Captain, who began to light up, "on the whole of that bank on which our anchor lies, there was not one single living creature, whilst these pools and shallows swarm with myriads of fish, of every possible shape and colour; some light and graceful, some dark and sluggish, some even grotesque in form, and, I may almost say, in feature."

"It is a beautiful sight," replied Danvers.  
"The brightest flowers are not more rich in

colour than these denizens of the ocean. 'Tis wonderful to see red, yellow, blue, every shade of brown, scales of glittering silver, spots and bars of burnished gold, lavished in rich profusion on these tiny creatures,—such various forms, too, would appear to indicate corresponding varieties of character.”

“Doubtless, Doctor, for those little gaudy brilliant creatures, so slim and delicate, keep close together, their movements, though graceful are slow and gentle, whilst others, of grosser form and duller hue, dart here and there, disturbing everybody, as if in the mere indulgence of a restless spirit.”

“Look, sir,” said Danvers, who appeared to have been carried away for once by the enthusiasm of his companion: “pray observe that grotesque-looking, chowder-headed creature, half mouth; he must be the Merry Andrew of the party, a very Grimaldi: see, there’s a second like him, observe their antics, they chase each other in turn, with open mouths. Look how the

pursuer cuts a somerset, and darts off in a different direction ; now he makes a dart towards your finical little friends with his barn-door mouth wide open, as if to swallow them, to their evident alarm, as they close up into a compact mass, like frightened sheep."

"'Tis wonderful," ejaculated the Captain, "over he goes again. See how he darts off after something else. 'Tis a strange thing to say, Danvers, but if ever I saw boys at play, these little creatures are at high romps !"

"I have often watched with great interest, the habits and proceedings of animals," said Danvers, gravely, "though our turbid waters conceal the wonders of the deep from us. Far be it from me to say what instinct is, or is not, but it is quite clear to me that even fish, if they have have not some glimmering of reason, have something very like it !"

"Perhaps so, Doctor, though it is a question utterly beyond me ; but here comes Herbert,

with a very long face. I have indulged in an unusual canter on my hobby this morning, but the wearied spirit must have relaxation. I have been overweighted of late, Danvers, and these hobby-horsical glimpses of the secrets of the deep, are refreshing."

Daunton was a sensible contemplative man, who had seen much and read much, but like most self-taught men, he considerably over-rated his own scientific attainments. He was a religious man, too, and had a high relish, or rather a reverential admiration, for the wonders and beauties of the creation, which by no means extended to the wonders and beauties of art, or what is generally termed the fine arts. As he stood upon that rock, gazing fondly at his little Petrel, floating on the surface of the smooth and glassy ocean, like some graceful sea-bird in all her trim array, he pronounced her to be the most perfect specimen of beauty and symmetry ever produced by art of man,—what were pictures, statues,

triumphal arches, or even lofty temples, compared to the Petrel? Pshaw!

Herbert's countenance brightened as he read in his commander's face, feelings so congenial to his own.

"Look at the little beauty, sir," he said, "how lightly she treads the waters, her tall and slender spars tapering to a point, and leaning rakishly aft, her wide-spread yards decreasing in beautiful proportion to the masts they cross, ever ready to expand her white wings to the breeze, whilst her cordage so taut, so straight, so slender, in beautiful harmony with all around, seems more like harp-strings, than hempen ropes. Does she not look as if she scorned restraint, and panted to be off?"

"Just my own thoughts, Herbert, though I could not have expressed them so well," said Daunton, smiling at the enthusiasm of his young First Lieutenant, "and Danvers, there," he continued, "shuts his lubberly eyes to all this, to pore over sea-weeds and sponges, on

those oozy rocks, but there's no accounting for taste, Herbert !”

There was a little freemasonry between the Captain and the Doctor upon their hobby-horsical weaknesses, for they expected no sympathy from others.

“ I appeal, sir,” said Danvers laughing, “ to Herbert himself, Goth as he is, whether these fungi, and other strangely anomalous substances growing plant-like on those rocks, in that transparent water, and almost confounding animal with vegetable character, as well as substance, are not worthy objects of admiration ?”

“ I grant them to be both curious and beautiful, Doctor,” replied the First Lieutenant, with his eyes still fixed upon his ship; “ but I have no leisure for such pursuits, and I fear no taste for them. I came to attend the Captain to the watering-place, and to our wood-cutters. The work is very heavy, sir, for our poor fellows,” he continued, “ owing to the rough rocky

nature of the ground over which they have to roll the full casks, with great labour and difficulty, for at least two hundred yards. I spare them all I can, and protect them from the sun as much as possible; but still it is heavy work for them, as you have seen. There they are. I hope you think we have made the most of our time, sir. We can contrive to get a little shade here; and the men have water close at hand."

"You have indeed collected a good deal. I should hope, Herbert, that another day will complete us, and then we may go to sea for rest, though I fear we shall find no pirates. This is really a wonderfully strange-looking country!"

"It is indeed, sir," replied the Doctor; "but step a little this way. There, on the edge of that precipice opposite, is the most wonderful thing I ever saw. What do you think of that?"

"Wonderful, indeed, Doctor!" said Dauntton

in astonishment. "What on earth can sustain such a ponderous mass in such a situation? It is more than half over the edge, and yet it does not fall. It looks as if it were a huge loadstone sticking on the face of an iron precipice."

The subject furnished them with conversation on their way down to the gig, which was now waiting them.

"Halloo, Darby, what are you up to? What is it you are munching away at in that dark corner?" said a sharp but not unpleasing voice, as its owner, Mr. Tandy, thrust his head suddenly in at the door of the midshipman's berth. "Fair play, Darby: why, you'd eat the whole mess allowance, and then swear you were hungry!"

"Faith, Tandy," replied the youth, "you are not very wide of the mark there; short allowance does not suit me in any way. It's only a cold 'petate' I'm eating. Chouchow picked it up on the stray, and it's none of the best



neither; but it's no time to be nice in these matters. Och! this sea-life would be a mighty pretty sort of a life, if one could only get something to eat now and then!"

"Well, Darby, we may drink as much as we like now—that's some comfort; and as the ship's at an anchor, you are the boy, Darby, that knows how to catch them hungry divils o' gulls and gannets and Cape hens, that are squalling and plunging under the ship's stern. Just get us a score of the biggest of them; Chouchow and I will turn 'em into a pigeon-pie in no time. 'Twill do your heart good to see it."

"And still more to eat it. I'll catch the poor beasts for you fast enough; and I believe Chouchow and you, if you laid your heads together, would turn 'em into a plum-pudding if ye liked it. I only wish ye would! A fellow like you, Tandy, as thin as my grandmother's thread-paper, with a pair of legs like broom-stalks, may thrive upon suction, like your blood-relation, Jack Snipe; but that won't shute me.

If old Grogson didn't sell me half his allowance of bread for my rum, I'd starve, I would!"

"I suspect, Darby, that when you go to Herbert's cabin to read, 'tis something better than books ye get. At least, ye're grown remarkably studious since we got upon short allowance, my friend—ha!"

"Hish, man," said Darby, who probably wished to change the subject. "Come here, and you'll see old Grogson behind the lid of his big chest there, spoiling that beautiful wather with the contents of his rum bottles. The old soaker says that case-bottle is his privilege as mate of the hold. It's little he cares for the water!"

"The old fellow's nose," said Tandy, "is as red already as a ripe cherry;—but there's 'Stand by hammocks,' Darby. I'll go up and get a mouthful of fresh air before I turn in."

"You are too late, you must wait now till the hammocks are down, or ye'll get the breath squeezed out of your little body in the hatch-

way. See, Tandy, if there isn't Somers, sneaking away from behind Grogson's big chest. He's been taking a sup at the rum bottle, too. That old fellow will be the ruin of Somers, for he's not altogether one of the right sort, that boy, I'm afraid, though they do say he will have five thousand a-year."

The strong sea-breeze of the afternoon, though it retarded the watering, and added much to the labour of the boat's crews, was so refreshing, that it was anxiously looked for. And if the land wind at night, on this bare and barren coast, was not laden with the rich perfumes which greet the toilworn mariner on his return to the land of the orange and the myrtle, it was at least free from the deadly malaria, too often borne by breezes scarcely less fragrant, from coasts teeming with the rich spicy produce of more fertile tropical regions.

The Petrel, guarded by the prudent pre-

cautions of her experienced captain, had not a single case of dangerous fever on board, and the men previously ill had become rapidly convalescent, from the moment in which they had free access to fresh water, which amply repaid Daunton for the time lost by declining to work at night.

Health is, on service, the first element of efficiency, and woe betide the commander who, by inconsiderate haste, or too rigid an adherence to formal rules, or by giving too much license, overlooks this fact.

“Our water will be completed to-day, sir,” reported Herbert to the Captain, on the third day: “may the people land to-morrow, sir, one watch at a time, to wash and scrub every thing they have, in fresh water ; for their frocks and trowsers have been so long and so often scrubbed in salt water, and dried in a hot sun, that they are saturated with hard salt, and crackle under the hand. They are terribly rough wearing, and imbibe damp from the

night dews, which are chilly enough in themselves."

"It is an excellent opportunity, Herbert, for this," replied the Captain: "then one day to bring down the wood, and off to sea for rest. I only wish we could have something fresh and wholesome for our poor fellows to eat, but there is no chance of that here. Our provisions, originally of bad quality, are now half perished with age: the salt meat has been casked up for years."

Herbert always rowed round his ship before breakfast, to inspect her external appearance, which he did as minutely now as if she had been lying at Spithead, with twenty jealous rivals to compete with her; for he was quite as great an admirer of that taut, trim, rakish-looking little Petrel as Dauntton himself; but with this important difference, that, whilst with the Captain, our noble craft reigned supreme, and without a rival, this was by no means the case with Frank Herbert; for a

certain blooming Hebe face, and a bright pair of dark blue eyes, radiant with fun and feeling, whilst they glanced and sparkled with irresistible force, through rich glossy tresses of wavy nut-brown hair, had made a deeper impression on his imagination.

On his last visit to Cape Town this bright vision, the fair and fascinating Norah, own sister to our friend Darby Darcie, had laughed, sung, and danced with poor Herbert, till he had become bewildered, enchanted, or, what is commonly called, over head and ears in love. Nor was Norah, though honest and artless as maiden may be, either unconscious of her conquest, or perhaps quite indifferent to it. Her father, Colonel Darcie, commanded the 103rd regiment, in garrison at the Cape. It had been rumoured that this gallant corps was shortly to proceed to India ; but nothing certain was known upon that subject when Herbert had left. It was equally uncertain when the Petrel would return thither, and these two

uncertainties put together, it had become a painful matter of doubt to the lover, whether when she should return, those same bright eyes and sunny tresses would still be visible in Cape Town.

Herbert was strolling listlessly up the ravine, alone, and wholly entranced in thoughts of this painful uncertainty upon a point so vital to his happiness, he had for the moment totally forgotten his wooding and watering parties, and indeed the gallant Petrel herself; so that if, at that unlucky moment, he should have been suddenly asked how he did? what o'clock it was? or any other question upon any possible subject, the probability was that he would have answered, "Norah Darcie;" for Herbert's lips and his heart were ever in close communion. But he was gently recalled to recollection by the proceedings of three young Mids, who just then appeared, in close and earnest conference, a few yards from him. They were gradually

approaching nearer to the man of authority, though with some hesitation, as if their plans had not yet been quite matured, and when, in deference to his proximity, they had ceased to talk, they kept up a telegraphic communication amongst themselves, by nods, winks, and shrugs, whilst they urged forward their spokesman.

This pantomime had put to flight all Herbert's serious thoughts, and he found some difficulty in keeping his countenance, whilst affecting not to observe what was going on; well did he know the mirth-loving trio. At length our old friend Mr. Tandy having been fairly shoved forward by his companions, broke ground thus :—

“Please, sir, as the work is done for the day, may Darcie and Somers and I have leave to take a ramble on the hills: 'tis a long time since we have stretched our legs on shore, sir. We have brought our dinner from the ship with us, and we'll be down upon the beach before sunset.”



“That sounds fair enough, Mr. Tandy, but I don’t always find results to correspond so exactly as they ought to do, with promises of this sort, not that I doubt your word, Mr. Tandy, but it does, somehow or other, too often happen that some extraordinary, not to be foreseen accident does occur, which not only mars the promised result, but does not unfrequently bring you all, more or less, into some serious scrape !”

“I must own, sir,” replied Mr. Tandy apologetically, “that last affair of the grapes did look awkward—but it was only a few bunches, sir. There they hung staring us in the face, over the low wall, sir, and we so hot and thirsty. We halloed and offered to buy them, but nobody came, and we began to fear we should get faint on the road, and so be too late for the boat; and we had hardly taken a very few bunches just to slake our thirst, and they were hanging within reach, sir, when we saw the nigger grinning over the wall and

watching us, and he followed us down to the boat."

"Rather a lame story, Mr. Tandy, but I know you would not speak an untruth. You say that you called out you would buy the grapes. Now I ask you! if at that very time you had money to buy them with?"

"I hadn't myself, sir, but I made sure Darby Darcie had, and that's all one."

"Had you any money, Darby?"

"Not a cowrie, sir; but I thought Tandy had. I saw some dirty looking paper in his hands just before, and I thought it was Cape dollars."

"Let this be a warning to you to be more cautious and correct in future. I don't think you'll meet with much temptation from grapes, in these hills to-day, and if you, Mr. Tandy, would employ your very acute reasoning faculties in persuading your friends to keep clear of scrapes, instead of reserving them to palliate matters, when the mischief into which you

have led them is under question, it would be very much better for them as well as yourself, Mr. Tandy."

"Depend upon it, sir," replied Tandy with confidence, "we'll get into no scrape to-day. I don't think it's possible, sir."

"Nor do I, Mr. Chap, which I consider to be my best security. But why are you always spokesman on these occasions? why not Somers, or Darby Darcie?"

"Why, sir," said Darby, turning up his handsome face, full of fun and good humour; "they don't send me, because they say you'd just be bothering o'me, and laughing at me, till may be we'd get no answer at all!"

"You shall have your ramble, Darcie, if it's only for the honesty of that speech; but keep out of mischief. I have always certain misgivings when you boys are long out of my sight. Remember the Captain is rather sore about your last exploit. He'll be asking after you before sunset, and recollect there's no twi-

light here. The last boat leaves the shore at sunset."

"Thank ye, sir," said all three, and they were going off in great glee, but Herbert stopped them.

"How is your larder furnished for such an expedition, in these hard times?"

"Why, sir," replied Darby, "there's the pigeon-pie—"

"What! a pigeon-pie? you might as well tell me you had venison and turtle soup."

"Faith, I wish we had sir! but there's the pigeon-pie, sure enough; I caught the gulls, and the Cape hens; Tandy and Chouchow made them into a pigeon-pie, by the same token there's the feet of the poor devils sticking out at the top of the crust, all regular."

Herbert laughed heartily at Darby's description of their pigeon-pie.

"But how the deuce could you bake it? we have had nothing to heat an oven with for a long time."

“ Oh, sir,” said Darby, “ we baked it, by boiling it in the coppers ; there was nothing else for it.”

“ Well, well, boys, I have had my laugh at your pigeon-pie ; I think I’m bound to try and mend your fare. There’s a basket sent for the Doctor and me, as we intended to have dined on shore, but we have agreed to dine early, with the Captain, on board, and to explore the valley in the afternoon ; so take the basket. It will be a reinforcement to your commissariat. But remember Captain Dauntton and I will be in your neighbourhood, and again I say, let us have no scrapes.”

Thus dismissed, our gallant adventurers lost no time in getting beyond the reach of a second recall, and having effectually accomplished this important object, Tandy forthwith called a council of war.

“ I wish,” said Somers, “ we had brought a musket with us, for in these wild hills we might have killed something worth showing ”

“ We’ve got quite enough to carry already,” said Darby, who being much stronger than his companions, and easy tempered withal, generally bore the burden of the day. “ I vote,” he said, “ that we sit down here, and examine the contents of Herbert’s basket, and lighten the baggage wagon by dining. We shall be better up to our work, and have less to carry!”

This reasonable proposition was instantly adopted, a shaded spot was found, and the pigeon-pie was voted to be excellent,—they only wished there had been more flesh on the bones.

“ Ah,” said Darby, trying to put on a doleful look, but with very little success ; “ ah ! this is the last drop of our onions and petates, boys, in this same pie,—no more lobscouse, nor chowder ; sea-pies are out of the question now, and there’s nothing left for it but the naked salt junk, more’s the pity—but hurrah, care killed the cat, so let’s be thinking what we shall be at. We must try our hand at

something, Tandy, and there's no grapes here, bad luck to these great big lumps of rock, laying about everywhere."

"Talking of these lumps of rock, boys," said Tandy, "suppose we work our way up yonder, and have a close look at that huge whopper that's hanging by the eyelids on the edge of that steep mountain. Most of these hills seem pretty easy to mount on one side, though as steep as a wall upon the other."

"Capital," exclaimed Darby; "everybody has been wondering at it, and asking how it can possibly hold on as it does, and we are the boys that will tell 'em all about it."

They now put up the fragments of the feast and prepared for the adventure, in great spirits.

"See, Darby," said Tandy, coaxingly, and winking to Somers, "ye'll have a light load now, man."

"It's a baste of burden ye're making of me," said Darby, laughing, "but there's no help for

it. Ye're a pretty couple, I must say ; but as for the four legs of ye, they're mere mop-sticks, I'd be ashamed of the like of 'em. I must say ye're bold fellows to thrust the whole weight of your little bodies to 'em, let alone carry the prog!" And then stretching out a leg of remarkably fine proportions, he said, "Look there, the pair of ye! that's what I call a good understanding, boys!"

Tandy had a particular dislike to comparisons of this sort, but chuckled internally with the very agreeable consolation, that if Darby Darcie did beat him hollow in the matter of thews and sinews, he, Tandy, had wit enough to lead his sturdy friend pretty much as he pleased, if not so completely as he did Somers, who he was wont to say, with some scorn, could boast of no such jackassical advantages over him as those Darby was so proud of; and nothing pleased this ingenious and somewhat mischievous specimen of middyism better, than to save his own labour by employing his friend



Darby's strength upon such occasions as the present.

"Come," he said, "let's be off; we have a heavy job before us. Let me help you up with the basket, Darby?"

"Go a-head, I'm ready in a moment," said his friend; and whilst he was adjusting his burden to his satisfaction, the other two had advanced a short distance to explore the ascent.

"Somers," said his sharp-witted leader, "Darcie's a capital fellow, but he's subject occasionally to hungry fits, which are sometimes attended by a slight lapse of memory; so whilst I look out the best way to mount the hill, do you keep our friend always in sight. If you don't, and one of these same hungry fits should take him, he'd devour the whole of our prog in no time, and be very sorry for it, which would be of little use to us, Somers! Here he comes; I'll go on, you look after him."

When Darby had so honestly stated to Herbert the reason which his friends, or rather Tandy, had given, for never employing him as their ambassador when they had a favour to ask, Herbert had observed a very singular expression in Mr. Tandy's shrewd countenance, and, reflecting upon the whole affair, he became conscious that he did take great delight in long colloquies with Darby, and was rarely in haste to close them. His attention once drawn to this subject, he soon discovered the cause of it all. The tones of Darby's voice had ever brought Norah before him.

"Confound that prying, quick-witted brat," he muttered. "I have more than once chanced to overhear him quiz Darby for being favoured by me, but it touched me not, for I knew I had no such intention; no sort of mischief comes amiss to Mr. Tandy—nothing escapes the saucy whelp."

The Captain's little party were seated at their early dinner in the cabin, and dis-

cussing their projected excursion up the valley.

"'Tis a strange wild district," said the host, "completely deserted by man and beast;" then suddenly starting rather abruptly from the subject under discussion, "Where are those youngsters, Herbert?" he said, "I don't like their being long out of sight; they are sure to be in mischief."

"Why, sir, they begged hard for a ramble in the hills, and the poor boys have been so long shut up in that dark close little berth of theirs, and half starved into the bargain, and have borne it all so cheerfully, that I could not refuse them. Indeed, I thought it would do them good to stretch their legs over the hills; so, as I imagined it quite impossible for them to get into mischief, I added Danvers's dinner and mine to their own store, and made them promise to be down at the boat before sunset."

The Captain shook his head, rather mis-

givingly ; so Herbert gave them the history of the pigeon-pie, at which they had a hearty laugh, and soon after they landed.

We confess to a coincidence of opinion upon many points with the worthy Captain of the Petrel, and can fully sympathise with his apprehension of mischief whenever our well-beloved Mr. Tandy and his satellites happened to have been for any considerable time left to their own devices. And there is strong reason to believe that the eminent and sagacious individual of whose ingenuity we have spoken, under the singular name of Chouchow, though he undoubtedly possessed some more Christian-like appellation, which remained a dead letter in the pages of the ship's books, amongst the many other hidden mysteries thereof, because he never would willingly answer to any other name but that by which we have introduced him. This singular individual, we observe, who had a more full and correct knowledge of the habits and pro-

pensities of the youthful trio than any other person, he having long served as a sort of maid-of-all-work to the Midshipman's berth, in virtue of which office he performed the several duties of cook, valet, and chambermaid to the whole party, acting occasionally moreover as tailor or washerwoman. This useful attendant had obviously, like ourselves, a fellow-feeling upon this point with the worthy Captain, for no sooner had the rumour reached him that his three young masters had set out for the hills, of which he had heard such wild and dismal accounts, than to the utter astonishment of everybody, he, Chouchow himself, who never could be prevailed upon to set his foot on shore unless positively ordered to do so, flew to the commanding officer.

"Please, sir," said Chouchow, plucking a forelock of his rough hair, "may I have leave to go on shore?"

"On shore!" said the astonished Mr. Anstey, "I thought you never went on shore. It's the

beauty of the country, I suppose, that tempts you. Oh yes, go on shore, if it's only for the fun of the thing."

Chouchow, thus authorised, landed from the first boat, with a covered basket in his hand, inquired what route the youngsters had taken, and set out after them with a degree of energy and activity habitual to him in all his movements.

Little did our adventurous young Middies know, or care, what the rest of the world might be thinking about or doing; to reach the summit of that precipice, and the huge rock dangling from it, which had so astonished and puzzled everybody else, and to ascertain what really retained it in so strange a position, was to them for the moment the only thing in the world worth thinking about. A weary task it was to reach the top of the rugged mountain; often did they stop to take breath, and to moisten their parched lips, for the sun was awfully fierce: but their stock of

liquids was so small that strict economy was necessary.

At length they found a cave, which afforded a most welcome protection from the sun, and soon after Tandy, poking about amongst the shattered rocks of every imaginable form which surrounded their retreat, had the good fortune to discover a natural basin, containing at least a barrel of water, so pure, so cool, that they gave three cheers for joy. This was indeed a luxury.

Thus rested and refreshed they started once more, in high condition, and at last attained the highest point of the hill or mountain, some few sharp broken pinnacles of bare rock excepted, and soon they stood by the object of their expedition. Its size even exceeded their expectations ; it overhung the precipice fearfully, and appeared to be retained in its place merely by a few detached fragments, more or less of wedge-like shape, against, but not absolutely upon, which it rested. The balance

was thus very slightly inclined inward, and it looked as if a kick would dislodge it. The elevated situation commanded an extensive view, including a considerable sheet or pool of fresh water, a long distance up the valley.

“Look,” said Darby, “there’s the Captain, and Herbert, and the Doctor, t’other side of the narrow valley, amongst the trees and bushes. But what are ye after, Tandy, shoving your long nose under that big baste of a rock? Ye’ll have it moving, for I don’t see what stops it; and ye’ll be crushed like a bit of a beetle under it.”

Tandy, after crawling round both sides of the huge boulder, to the very edge of the precipice, sprang suddenly up upon his feet.

“My life for it, boys,” he exclaimed in great delight, “if ye’ll only work heartily with me for five minutes, we’ll launch the whole concern, slap dash amongst them all! And what will old Daunty, yonder, say when he sees it a coming?”



“I don’t believe we’ll do it, Tandy ; but here’s have a try at it,” said Darby, rising up.

“Lend me your stick, Somers,” said Tandy, “and both of ye creep close under the rock. Ye’ll soon see how little ’tis that holds it. We’ll have a glorious launch yet, boys.”

All three went at once to work under Tandy’s directions ; for the lower part of the mass, as well as its exposed sides, was rough and irregular in its formation ; so much so that it rested upon projecting points, which, scarcely indenting the rocky surface of the ground, left vacant spaces, through which, by crawling under it, they could pretty clearly see the small wedge-faced stones, by leaning against which its very precarious position was maintained.

“Give me the stick again,” said Tandy, “I see what holds it. Now—there it goes!” he exclaimed. “Jump back, boys !”

A slight movement took place, and they all drew back, but no launch followed.

“I see what it is now,” exclaimed their bold little leader; “one poke more. Stand back! stand back!” he cried, and once more his comrades started to their feet.

A horrid crash ensued,—the solid rock beneath their feet seemed to tremble as in an earthquake,—a thick cloud of dust arose. The huge boulder was indeed launched, and was thundering down the precipice, bounding from crag to crag, crushing and smashing whatever it came into contact with.

“Hurrah, Darby, it’s gone!” cried Somers.

But Darby turned deadly pale.

“Oh, Somers! Somers! where’s poor Tandy!”

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## CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN DAUNTON and his little party, attended by Jack Oakum, his coxswain, with his telescope, had landed, and were proceeding leisurely up the valley, picking their way amongst loose stones and thorny shrubs.

“Look here, sir,” said Danvers, leading the way into a sort of thicket, “here’s that skeleton of a large animal, of the antelope species, which must have been devoured by some wild beast, most probably by a lion. Observe how those bones have been crushed, and look at this skull; it has clearly been smashed in by

a blow of great violence. Nothing but a lion or a tiger could have done this."

"Certainly," replied Daunton, examining it, "there can be no doubt of it. At certain seasons these animals find feed here; and beasts of prey naturally follow them. That some of these bones have been literally crunched is obvious. They bear the marks of the teeth. It makes one shudder to think of a beast whose jaws had strength enough to do this; but as we have seen nothing to bring beasts of prey hither, we need have no apprehension of them at this season."

Whilst our two philosophers were discussing this interesting subject rather lengthily, Herbert, who had no taste for such matters, was left to himself, and his thoughts, true as the needle to the Pole, had forthwith reverted to a much more attractive object. He had, at one bound, reached the Cape, when they were all suddenly startled, by a noise like distant thunder—that same huge threatening mass of rock

which had been the constant object of their wonder, whilst it had hung suspended so mysteriously on the brink of the deep abyss beneath it, was plunging down the steep and rugged precipice, throwing up showers of splinters and clouds of dust, as it encountered different obstacles in its headlong descent. The valley was narrow, and their fascinated eyes distinguished its every movement. It soon reached the wooded part of the ravine, ploughing its resistless way through the matted forest, crushing huge trees like reeds or rushes, till at length it entered what appeared to be a thicket, like that in which they were then standing; but the real nucleus of which was a mass of huge rocks, each resembling the boulder now so violently assailing them, and most probably they had been its forerunners in the same terrific descent, though now, by the force of tropical vegetation, covered and concealed by trees and bushes. Here the rolling monster came into such violent col-

lision with an obstacle more than sufficient in weight and substance to arrest at once its furious course. The earth trembled even to the opposite side of the narrow valley where the wondering spectators stood, or else the vibration of the air from the awful concussion, caused it to appear to tremble. Large fragments of the shattered rocks were thrown to a considerable distance in all directions, and the clouds of dust which arose wrapped the immediate scene of action in darkness. A dreadful pause followed. Jack Oakum flew to the Captain's side, as if he thought his chief in danger. Not a word was spoken, till Dauntton, recovering from his astonishment, asked somewhat petulantly—

“What the devil is all this?”

“Please your honour,” said Jack Oakum, who had taken a look with the glass, “it’s Mr. Tandy!”

“Mr. Tandy!” replied the Captain indignantly, and turning towards Herbert, “what

can' that mischievous brat have to do with all this row?"

Herbert had just brought his pocket telescope to bear upon the precipice from which the boulder had descended, but before he could quite satisfy himself, much less the Captain, as to the immediate cause of the extraordinary scene they had just witnessed, or as to what Mr. Tandy could possibly have to do with it, their whole attention was irresistibly drawn to a very different subject.

"Look, sir, look!" whispered the Doctor, pointing towards the edge of the cloud of dust, which still enveloped the immediate scene of the late collision.

"Lions, by heaven!" replied the Captain, in the same subdued tone.

"See, sir," resumed Danvers, "look at that lioness stealing away up the valley, at a trot, with a cub in her mouth; the lion's den has been in that rocky thicket, and has been crushed by the falling boulder."

"'Tis lucky it was not here they had it," muttered the Captain.

An enormous lion was now distinctly seen following in the track of his ferocious spouse, but his step was stately, as if disdaining to fly. He stopped, and turned as if to face and defy once more, the incomprehensible assailants of his domicile; looked fiercely at the shattered mass, from which he had so sulkily emerged, lashed out violently with his bushy tail, shook himself impatiently, bristled up his huge mane, and assuming that nobly graceful attitude unattainable by caged lions, but which stamps him in the forest as the noblest of beasts, uttered three furious roars; a concentrated expression of rage and defiance, which curdled the very blood of his hearers, bold as they were. No object was to be seen on which he might wreak his vengeance, the indignant hero turned, and followed with stately step the cub-bearing lioness. They were soon out of sight, to the great satisfaction of our



party, who were by no means armed for an encounter with such foes.

"'Tis quite as well that we were concealed in the thicket," said the Doctor, "and that our wooding party were out of sight too, or I believe that irritated monster might have made a fearful onslaught on either us or them."

"What was that you said about Mr. Tandy, Oakum?" asked the Captain. "What could that youngster have to do with all this?"

Jack Oakum was a man of few words. He put a long telescope into the Captain's hand, pointed to the precipice, and forthwith placed himself in a proper attitude for officiating as a rest for the glass.

"God bless me!" said Daunton, as soon as he had looked up through the glass, in the direction indicated, "there's one of those boys, Herbert, hanging upon that cliff, far down it too; what he has to stick to, I can't see?"

"Yes, sir," answered Herbert, "I think it is Tandy; and there is a head and face look-

ing over at him, which I'll swear belongs to Darby Darcie. I'll be up with them as quick as possible. Tandy is holding out an arm as if in answer to Darby."

Herbert started off at speed, but he had a long circuit to make before he could reach the accessible part of the hill. The Captain and Danvers took the same direction more leisurely.

Darby was not the boy to let his grief for his friend's disappearance evaporate in useless exclamations, nor indeed was his companion, though far less active and energetic. As soon as the cloud of dust had pretty well cleared away from before them, it became quite evident to the boys that the great rock and the great Mr. Tandy had both bundled over the edge of the precipice together; for on the side upon which Tandy had been at work there was a wide gap. The rock must have been less solid there, and intermixed with earth, for it had given way under the weight of the

boulder when it had moved ; though on the other side, where Darby and Somers had been, it was, fortunately for them, one solid mass of rock to the very edge, which had resisted the pressure, and saved them.

“ I’ll creep close to the edge, Somers,” said Darby, “ and look over. Do you hold me on by the heels. May be I’ll see something o’ the darlint ; he’s as light as a bird ; and he will have all his seventeen senses about him, will poor dear Tandy ; and if he has but a chance for his life, he’s the boy that will make the most of it.”

Darby drew himself along the ground to the very edge of the precipice ; his nerves were naturally firm, and his whole heart was with his friend ; he would have thought little of any risk to gain a chance of saving poor Tandy. At first he could see nothing, for not being sufficiently in advance, he had looked beyond his mark.

“ Och, Somers, dear,” he said aloud, “ the

darlint is kill't. I'll see nothing of him any ways."

This was the precise moment at which their perilous situation had been discovered by the party on the rise of the hill on the opposite side of the valley.

"Yoi ho, Darby!" came faintly up on the ear of the anxious boy; and he stretched himself out still farther over that tremendous abyss, thinking much more of his friend than of himself.

"Hold me hard, Somers," he said, "for I'm well over." And he was, most dangerously so.

This last generous, and indeed frightful risk, was instantly rewarded. There lay Tandy, on his back, in a most uneasy and dangerous position, resting on a slight projecting cradle-like ledge, over which the descending boulder must have leaped, and half-smothered with dust and earthy matter.

"Och, Somers dear," cried Darby Darcie

with delight, "it's now I see him; 'tis an awful bed for a Christian to lie upon. But Tandy takes it aisy, or else it's not long he'd hold on there. He's pointing across the way, and beckoning; he can see them yonder; and he's aware of that big roaring baste too now, that's looking so fierce there. Ay, and they see him; God be praised! There's Herbert started off like a greyhound. Oh, that we had a bowline knot, to let down to him!"

"Ay, ay," roared Darby, in answer to signs Tandy was making to him.

He then, with Somers dragging at his legs, drew back, and stood up. "Go down as fast as you can, Dick Somers," he said. "A couple of stout hands, and a few fathoms of rope, would soon bring him up all right. I wish I could lower some grub down to him, to keep him quiet. I'll just look over and keep up his spirits."

Somers had started long before Darby had said all this, but had scarcely advanced a hun-

dred yards when he met Chouchow blowing like a grampus, from his exertions in mounting the steep and rugged hill. Great was the delight of the two agitated boys at this important and unexpected reinforcement.

Chouchow had never doubted, from the moment in which he had heard the direction that his young masters had taken, but that they would speedily get into difficulties of some sort. With his habitual sagacity, foresight, and unscrupulosity, he had taken two hand lead-lines from the chains unobserved, and having a small axe belonging to the berth already in his basket, he was pretty well prepared for anything that was likely to have happened. As soon as he had learned the state of the case, he peeped over the edge, to make himself fully master of the subject, but without showing himself.

“Now, Mr. Darby,” he said, “Somers and I will hold you on by the legs, whilst you tell Tandy that Chouchow is here with a rope, and

that we'll have him up in no time. It might startle him to see me all at once."

This was encouraging news to the sufferer, who, though not severely injured, was much shaken and bruised, and half smothered with dust, and did not dare to move, or to alter his position materially, though he had begun to feel cramped. He had perfect faith in the zeal and attachment of his two friends, especially of Darby; but he did not entertain a very high opinion of their ingenuity. In his situation, therefore, the arrival of the prompt though eccentric Chouchow was a decided advantage, though how he should have trusted himself such a distance from the ship, was a puzzler, which almost led him to fear he must be dreaming.

But Chouchow, no longer fearing to startle him, now projected his head and half his shoulders over the edge of the precipice, supported by one of the youngsters clinging with his whole weight to each of his

legs, which gave him considerable freedom of action.

"Don't answer me, Mr. Tandy," he said, "but just hold up your hand when you understand clearly what I say to you; answering would tire you."

Up went poor Tandy's hand.

"If I send down a bowline knot, are you able to put it over your shoulders, and to pass your arms through it?"

Up went the hand.

"I have plenty of rope, but I am afraid of cutting it against the sharp edges of the rocks, or of throwing down the loose stones upon you; so will go to some trees not very far off, and get a large branch to lay over the cliff, and then we'll send the rope down over the crutch of it. Do you understand?"

Up went both hands, for poor Tandy was delighted to see the care and caution of his active and zealous ally.

In a short time—though it had seemed



rather long to Tandy—a branch of a tree was laid along the ground close at hand, which had taxed the utmost strength of Chou and his companions to bring it to the spot. The thick end of it, with a strong crutch, was projected about a foot over the edge of the precipice, when Chou once more reached over and addressed Tandy.

“We’re all ready now. Look out for the bowline knot; there’s Darby’s jacket and Somers’ stick in it; their weight will enable me to guide it to you. Use the jacket for parcel-ling, that the rope may not cut you; the stick will serve you to boom off gently with; for if you do this roughly, with your feet, you’ll jar us too much. I don’t fear the rope, though I send it down doubled; but our outrigger can’t be very firm. Do you understand?”

Up went Tandy’s hands again. Chouchow then asked if he was ready, and once more received a satisfactory reply.

“Now, young gentlemen,” he said, “great

care and caution will be necessary; for if the rope should take a sharp rock, it may be cut, and then he'll go down the precipice altogether and be knocked to smash; or if it should set loose one of those great stones, it might knock him on the head. Our best chance of avoiding these risks is by keeping the rope in this crutch well beyond the edge of the cliff; but that is no easy matter. This is a wide-spreading branch, and we must all three place our whole weight upon it, to keep it steady. There goes the bowline knot. Ay, he's got it. We must not hurry him. One halloo when you're all ready, Mr. Tandy."

This was an anxious moment, especially to the two youngsters, who could not see what was going on below, and dared not move, as their weight kept steadily in the right place, was that upon which Tandy's life depended.

A faint halloo was heard, the decisive moment had arrived; again Chouchow shouted—

"We will haul taut the rope gently. And

you, as soon as your weight is fairly on it, rise upon your feet."

This having been clearly understood, Chouchow turned to the youngsters.—

"I must keep the crutch steady, and will light up the rope slowly to you. Hold it firmly, but do not haul upon it. I can see him here, and will direct you. Luckily he isn't much heavier than our great tom-cat, and he's almost as active."

Chouchow now drew the rope quite taut, and took Tandy's weight upon it; the boy rose upon his feet with all a seaman's confidence in a rope. Again Chouchow addressed him—

"Look well above your head, you can see the face of the cliff, much better than I can. Avoid any jerk as much as possible."

He then began to draw Tandy up slowly and gently, whilst Darby and Somers gathered in the slack of the rope, with their hearts in their mouths. The rope was fearfully slender,

and by no means new, whilst at the other end of it, dangled poor Tandy, their light-hearted, sharp-witted friend, and leader, with a gulf beneath him, at least eight hundred feet deep, well garnished with sharp crags. It was easy to see what his fate must be, if the slight cord should be partly cut, or even materially chafed, and on the other hand, the falling of any one of those detached rocks, or stones, which lay strewn about so thickly, might knock out his brains, and leave them nothing to draw up, but his lifeless corpse. All depended upon the strength, caution, and dexterity, of Chouchow, to whose mutterings, the anxious boys listened with painful interest, scarcely breathing lest they should lose a word. They had implicit faith, however, in the ingenuity of Mr. Chief-Engineer Chouchow, and not a little in Mr. Tandy himself, whose numerous hair-breadth escapes were matters of cock-pit history.

“Look out sharp below there,” roared

Chou ; "there, steadily ! gently !" he said, as he turned to the boys. "I wish I had some better means of steadying this infernal crutch, it wabbles confoundedly. Gently, lads ! confound that big stone ; well, it is gone clear of him, any how ; but a close shave it was. Don't shove off with your foot, I tell you, Mr. Tandy, or you'll jerk the rope out of the crutch. There, we come again cheerly—no hurry, lads, no hurry. Be cool. Hold well on. There's his head above water at last. Give me the other end of the lead-lines, Mr. Darcie ; that's it : now pass the bight round both your bodies,—that's it. Here, Mr. Tandy, take the ends of this line in both your hands. You're all safe now. Them two will weigh half-a-dozen of you—stand back both of you, as far as the line will let you. The crutch may slip in now ; it's no more use : that's right ! Now, Mr. Tandy, help yourself up, with all your might, by the lines in your hands ; they won't give way. There ! now

I've got a grip of your collar ; yo, heave ho ! altogether. There we are, landed safe and sound ; a bason of water and a clothes brush wouldn't harm ye, Mr. Tandy. That's right, Mr. Darcie, a drop o' that wine is the very thing for him ; dancing the tight-rope is nothing to this,—is it, Mr. Tandy ?”

Chouchow had it all his own way ; and well he deserved it.

At this moment, Herbert made his appearance, having far outstripped all competitors in mounting the rugged ascent.

“ Help is at hand,” he said, “ and the Doctor on his way up.”

He was delighted to find that matters were no worse ; and soon began to look into the means by which the rescue had been accomplished.

The boys were loud in praise of Chouchow, to whom they justly gave all the credit of their success. Herbert could not but admire the simple means by which they had overcome

so many difficulties, avoiding, at the same time, so many dangers.

“Where’s your friend Chouchow, Darby? he deserves the greatest credit.”

But that eccentric individual was nowhere to be found.

“It’s no use looking for him,” said Darby, who well knew Chou’s habits, “depend upon it he’ll neither stop nor stay till he gets into the first boat that may be going on board; and we’ll find him sitting on the chest outside the midshipmen’s berth. The only wonder is, how he came here, just in the nick, when Somers and I were bothered entirely, whilst poor Tandy was dancing upon nothing, back of beyond there.”

“Since I am here,” said Herbert, “and you, I see, are safe and sound, which is more than you deserve, I’ll have a look up the valley with my glass, for those lions must have their reasons for establishing themselves here; and I should like to have the skin of that

fierce-looking gentleman. There's nothing to be seen from the other side. Haha! I see a pool of fresh water. That's precisely what I wished for, and had lost all hope of finding; if Captain Daunton will let me have my way for one night, we'll have plenty of venison for all hands yet!"

"What's fresh-water pools to do with venison?" asked Darby, innocently.

"Ask Tandy; for I see, by the twinkle of his eye, he understands me, though you can't."

"It's clear enough what you mean, sir," replied the boy, "and I'm astonished Darby does not see it; for he's always boasting that his understanding is very superior to mine."

"I'm glad to find you're getting saucy again, Tandy," said his friend; "but 'twill be droll enough if a bit of a chap like you, by cutting one queer caper, should frighten the lions, and give us a supply of venison,



now we are so hard up ; that would be great consequences from puny causes, Tandy."

Herbert had paid little attention to this sparring match. He was an enthusiastic sportsman. The sight of the pool of water had brought to his imagination visions of herds of deer coming down to it at night, and the possibility of the lions joining in the fray, when Tandy interrupted his day-dream.

"I hope, Mr. Herbert, you'll get me out of this little scrape with the Captain; and I'll never go head first over a precipice again, as long as I live!"

"You are an impudent young Jack-a-napes, Mr. Tandy," he said, "but I think the fright this time should be punishment enough."

"Fright, sir!" said Tandy, with a start, "I beg leave to deny the fright."

## CHAPTER IV.

THE party were now descending the mountain in high spirits ; the boys were delighted not only at Tandy's escape, but because they had faced the First Lieutenant without pains and penalties, for Herbert could think of little just now but the approaching deer-hunt, and the possibility of laying the shaggy spoils of that huge lion at the feet of his fair Norah ; for wherever his anticipations or day-dreams might commence, they were sure some way or other to lead him to Norah Darcie at last.

"It's hot and thirsty you are, Mr. Herbert,"

said Darby. "Ye gave us a basket this morning, that carried us through the day well; and I made Tandy swallow the last drop of your wine, as soon as we got him up, and it cheered him entirely; but I think I can find something that's cool and fresh, and will be full as good for you now as wine, and better too."

"I'll say you're a very clever fellow, Darby, if you do that, in such a wilderness as this."

Darby laughed.

"Just step round that rock to the left of you. That's it; now mount those steps-like on the rock."

Herbert had no sooner done this, than he saw immediately before him a deep hollow in the surface of a flat porous rock, filled with water, cool and limped as heart could wish. What are the most delicious wines to pampered palates, compared with the luxury of Herbert's draught from that natural reservoir; heated, fatigued, and fevered as he had been,

by extreme exertion and anxiety! They stopped a few minutes to indulge in this simple luxury.

“Go forward, Darby,” said Herbert, “you are the freshest of the party, and call out to all those you see advancing, to turn back; we don’t want them now. I wonder we don’t see some of them coming up.”

“I’m ready and willing, sir,” replied the boy, “but I won’t meet one of them, you may depend upon it; Chouchow has sent them all back, and by this time they knew all about it at the beach. Chou has all his wits in his pocket, I believe, for he is never without them; and he said to me, as he started, ‘Mr. Darby, I’ll be telling the people below, that all’s right up here; no harm in that you know.’”

“Your man Chou,” said Herbert, “is a queer fellow: we must do something for him. I once offered to take him as my servant, by way of giving him an easy berth. He seemed to be delighted for a minute, but after a little

hesitation, he stammered out, 'I hope you won't be angry, sir, I am hard worked, but I can't leave them young gentlemen. I couldn't well do without them, and some how, sir, I don't think they'd get on at all without Chouchow.'"

"No man ever spoke a truer word than that same," said Darby, "but what ails ye, Tandy? Ye havn't spoke a word good or bad this half-hour. I'm thinking, Mr. Herbert, that Tandy is rather delicate-like about seeing the Captain."

"Well, Darby, you put the case so delicately, that I must see what I can do for him. Chou and you helped him out of one scrape, and I was too late, so I'll see and give him a lift now. It's a sign of grace in Tandy, that he can be afraid of any thing."

Tandy for once had the good sense to look grateful, and hold his tongue, though there was a saucy remark hanging at the very tip end of it, and longing to come out.

Luckily for our adventurers when they re-

turned to the ship, Herbert's discovery of the pools of fresh water, and the confidence with which he spoke of ample supplies of venison in consequence, occupied all thoughts and tongues. He had two heavy guns on board and mixed metal balls for them, expressly for shooting wild beasts. These were prepared for immediate service, to the great delight of every body but the Captain, who listened rather gravely to his First Lieutenant's sanguine assurances, that if permitted to take a party up the valley for one night, he would procure an ample supply of fresh meat. There was nothing that Captain Dauntton more desired, but he dreaded night-work for his men.

"We can reconnoitre the place, sir, in the morning," said Herbert. "We shall be sure to see the tracks of the herds who come down to the water at night; and we may kill as many of the fattest of them as we please, without difficulty."

“And the lions, Mr. Herbert? It will puzzle you to kill them. They may eat you, but we can’t eat them if you do kill them. I suspect the lions are your chief object; and it’s all good fun for you young fellows to hunt lions, but I won’t have my people endangered for any such fancies.”

The Captain was so firm in refusing to expose his people to the night dew, and the possibility of a lion chase, that he could only be brought to give a reluctant consent to the deer hunt, upon the express conditions that the whole party should be posted in trees, beyond the reach of danger. Herbert did all he could to escape this mortifying condition, but without success.

Upon examining the ground which led from the interior through a narrow gorge to the waterpool, it was found that a path had been formed by the constant passage of the herds towards the pool, leading close under some very large trees. Every other part of the pass

was rough, stony, and bare, and arrangements were made accordingly.

The Captain was still fidgetty, and all their preparations only put him more out of humour.

“Didn’t you see, Mr. Danvers,” he said, “that all those skeletons you found in every thicket must have been killed by lions; and if there are many such as that fellow we saw, it will be awkward dealing with them. Even if Herbert should kill any eatable beasts, they will be mere skin and bone at this season.”

“It does not necessarily follow, sir,” said Danvers. “These herds traverse wide districts, and find abundance of food somewhere in all seasons. They may possibly be in good condition; and it’s a great object to the health of our men to procure a little wholesome and nourishing diet for them, which I think we shall.”

“Ay, there you have me, Doctor! If it was not for that consideration, Herbert would



have to give up all hope of a lion hunt, upon which I see he has set his mind, though he says little about it. So I suppose you must go; and I'm losing another day too, here, and I don't like that."

Herbert coming up to make some report to the Captain, the conversation was soon resumed; for the subject was uppermost in all their minds, though they did not all take exactly the same view of it. Daunton was still obviously out of humour.

"I only wish, sir," said Herbert, "to take a small party. We shall be well armed; and the trees, or indeed one of them, will afford shelter to us all. The animals must pass quite close to us, as the path they have made is almost under the trees. A single yard beyond the pathway the gorge is rough impracticable ground. We may select our victims at leisure."

"It's all very fine, Mr. Herbert, but only that from the immense importance of a change

of diet to our poor fellows just now, I can't find in my heart to lose the smallest chance of getting a fresh meal or two for them, not one of them should go. Danvers here is a sportsman too, though not perhaps so mad for a lion hunt as you are; but recollect, I will have the precautions I have prescribed carried out to the very letter."

"It shall be so, sir; depend upon it," replied Herbert.

Nothing was talked of throughout the ship but Herbert's expedition. As a fine, active, handsome young fellow, full of life and spirit, always foremost in danger or in difficulty, handling the craft beautifully, and good-humoured, though somewhat hasty and self-willed, the First Lieutenant was a general favourite; and our seamen are excellent judges of the character of their officers. They have too deep an interest in the subject to be easily deceived.

"Well, Tandy," said young Darcie, in the

Mid's berth, "are you to be of Herbert's party? I am not, bad luck to it, I'm cut out entirely."

"It appears to me," replied his acute and saucy friend, "that the First Lieutenant, since his last trip from Simon's Bay to Cape Town, loves dearly to laugh and talk with you, Darby, but seems resolved to keep you out of harm's way. I'm thinking that either your mother, or somebody else, has given him a hint upon that subject. I hope to go with him, but I dare not ask it; at any rate, I must wait a little first. Perhaps, as he must not take you, he may be wanting me,—that's my best chance."

"Mr. Tandy, the First Lieutenant wants you on the quarter-deck," said the messenger boy.

And before Darby could reply to this last impertinent insinuation, which he himself began to suspect might not be altogether without some foundation, Tandy was gone.

“Well, Mr. Scapegrace,” said Herbert, “are you sound wind and limb, after leaping a precipice, cheek by jowl with that huge boulder, and dangling so long over such a ravine by a piece of whip-cord ? If so, I have some thoughts of taking you with me to-night, for you can run up a tree like a racoon, and I shall want a light hand with a sharp eye, to look out aloft. But I’m half afraid, after all your scrapes, that the Captain won’t let you go. Has he spoken to you yet ?”

“Captain Daunton has not seen me yet, sir ; Darby has taken my watch for me whenever the Captain was likely to see me. He’s other things to think of ; and he’ll soon forget all about it.”

At this moment Daunton came on deck. There was no possibility of escape for the youngster ; the Captain, who was still evidently out of humour, looked angrily at him. The conference with Herbert just then raised his suspicions.

“ You are not going to take that youngster with you, Mr. Herbert ?” he said, very gravely. “ He’d be sure to bring down some mischief or other upon the whole party ; and I’m not half reconciled to this wild expedition as it is, without his being in it.”

“ As you please, sir,” replied Herbert. “ You may go down, Mr. Tandy. If I want you I’ll send for you.”

Then, addressing himself to the Captain, he added,

“ That boy is so light, active, and intelligent, that he would be very useful as a look-out high up in the tree, where I should have him completely in hand, and beyond all risk or possibility of mischief. Neither of the other youngsters could do it so well, and if I leave them all here in idleness, you, sir, will probably be annoyed in some way or other.”

“ Well, well, Herbert, do as you like. I should have little temper myself with him just now, after his late prank.”

And so Mr. Tandy joined the expedition.

The party arrived upon the ground an hour before sunset—Chouchow, and two trustworthy men, with Herbert, Danvers and Mr. Tandy, the latter somewhat disgusted that he was not permitted to carry a musket. Their guns, stores, and ammunition, were soon secured in convenient situations, amply afforded by a very large tree. Herbert took his place in the centre of the tree, with a large arm in front of him, which, when the foliage and small boughs had been lopped away, offered a commodious rest for the heavy guns. Everything in a direct line below it was carefully cut away, that they might be able to direct their fire close to the very foot of the tree, if necessary, for it was there that the track or path lay. Chouchow was placed behind Herbert, in charge of the heavy artillery; Danvers, with his rifle, on a level with his friend, who likewise had a rifle. On the further side of

each of the officers was a man with a musket; and Tandy was perched considerably higher up in the tree, to watch for and give notice of arrivals.

“Now mark what I say,” began Herbert. “No person is to fire, under any circumstances whatever, till I give the word, and then one only at a time. I shall probably let a considerable number of the animals pass before we attack them, not only because the leaders will be tough old bucks, who will take a deal of killing, and be good for nothing when killed, but because our fire, when many of them shall have gone by, will throw the whole herd into confusion in attempting to retreat by this narrow path, so that they cannot escape us. One word more,—whoever is called upon to fire must select a good-sized beast, and fire at his head, if possible between the eyes; for as they will be quite close to us, every shot ought to bring down its bird; and now we must remain quiet. Mr. Tandy, a

good look out aloft ; the slightest noise may undo all !”

About two hours after sunset, Tandy gave notice of some moving object well up the pass. It was a fine starlight night, the tall leaders of a herd were seen soon after, advancing slowly and cautiously. They hesitated as they approached the tree, tossing their heads, and snuffing the air audibly. It was quite clear that they had taken alarm, and for a moment it was doubtful whether they would not retreat altogether. To secure two or three of the headmost, was even then possible, and the temptation was great ; but Herbert exerted all his self-command, and discipline restrained the rest of the party. Even a whisper, or the slightest rustling in the tree which had evidently become an object of alarm to the timid and wary leaders, so accustomed to the sudden attacks of ferocious beasts, would have spoiled all ; but whilst the foremost on the narrow path hesitated, masses from behind them,



where the ground was more open, pushed steadily on, and the leaders almost of necessity again advanced. About fifty were allowed to pass, when Herbert, having selected his victim, gave the word, and fired his rifle; Danvers and the others followed in slow and orderly succession, as directed, so that each man might take deliberate aim, and be reloaded by the time it came to his turn to fire again. A fearful scene of confusion ensued amongst so large a number of animals crowded into so narrow a pathway; the ground was soon cumbered with the slain, and as no more slaughter had been contemplated than would supply their necessities, the fire of the party ceased, and the trembling fugitives were permitted to retreat, as best they might. A few words of congratulation on their success were interrupted by a terrific roar within a few yards of them, which, in the calm still night, vibrated upon every nerve. Even the boldest felt for one moment, when thus surprised, as if already

in the reach of the jaws of the ferocious monster, whose roar is so wildly expressive of strength and ferocity.

The excitement of the deer-hunt was lost, forgotten, for at the very foot of the tree which concealed the party, and within twenty feet of Herbert, the majestic lion, of whom they had once before had a distant view, lay crouched with a huge animal beneath his murderous grasp. Whilst his terrible claws pierced its flanks, his bloody jaws crunched audibly the bones of the neck of his prostrate victim; his back being turned towards the tree, as he lay perfectly quiet, apparently quaffing the life-blood of his prey, with a deep purring growl of satisfaction.

There was neither alarm nor confusion among the little party; all proper measures of security had been taken in time, and well taken. Herbert rested his heavy gun in the crutch of the branch, but he was anxious to strike a vital part, and the animal's front was

altogether covered, as he lay at his full length so close before his hidden foe, with his tail almost touching the tree. After a moment's consideration, Herbert resolved to aim at the spine, the whole length of which was exposed to him in a direct line, so that a little more or less of elevation would not baulk him, if he could keep the line of fire accurately. There was no need for haste, for whilst growling in low deep tones, the brute seemed to enjoy his occupation intensely, and never moved, except that his tail lashed gently, as it were with enjoyment. The muzzle of Herbert's gun was within a few feet of the animal's body, and the aim was taken with a pulse as calm as if firing at a snipe.

It was a moment of deep interest to the lookers-on, all of whom, the foliage below them having been cut away, could see distinctly everything that passed, except poor Tandy, who blinded by the thick foliage beneath his loftier station, and possessing quite

as much curiosity, as all the rest put together, had crept further and further out upon his branch with cat-like silence and dexterity, till he, too, had obtained a partial glimpse of matters below.—At length Herbert fired, the huge beast sent forth a yell, more hideous far than anything they had ever heard, giving full expression to its rage and agony.

Herbert had sprung back to his former station, the instant he had fired, and seized his second gun, expecting that the wounded lion would face round and spring at him, and thus expose his front for a death-wound. Nor was he much out in his conjecture ; for, dropping his mangled prey, the furious beast made a desperate effort to turn and attack his assailants ; but his object was only very imperfectly accomplished, and that obviously with extreme agony, the yells produced by which were frightful.

“ You’ve broken the spine, Herbert,” said Danvers, “ he cannot spring. You may finish

him at your leisure ; for he is unable to rise, having no power to turn his body."

"I see," said Herbert, "he has only, by those desperate efforts, drawn himself half round ; but he faces me, and I will put him out of his misery. Is that gun reloaded, Chou ? Very well, then ; reserve your fire, all of you. Those horrid cries will bring the lioness to the rescue. She will be much the more active and formidable of the two ; and we must be well prepared, as, in her fury, she may storm the tree."

He then once more descended a few feet, and levelling his gun at the lion's forehead, between the eyes (for his balls were not made of mere lead), he took a calm deliberate aim, whilst the lion glared at him with fiery blood-shot eyes, his huge distended mouth dripping with gore. He fired, and sprang up again into the centre of the tree with the agility of a young and active seaman.

Meanwhile, Tandy, whose curiosity had

overcome the very slender stock of prudence which Dame Nature had bestowed upon him, wondering what Herbert could hesitate so long about, after his first shot, and still more that the lion did not rise, though evidently still alive, had continued creeping further and further out, maddened by an imperfect view of the great event, till, at the very instant in which the grizzly monster sank under the last shot, with a fearful groan, Mr. Tandy's branch gave way with him, and down he came upon the hind-quarters of the dying lion.

In an instant Chouchow was down at his side, snatched him up and sprang into the tree with him, with an effort of strength and agility which excited the wonder and admiration of the whole party. At this very moment the lioness rushed upon the scene, and made a spring at Chouchow and his burden. One moment sooner on her part, or one particle less of exertion on the part of Chouchow, and both he and Tandy would

have fallen victims to her vengeance. She reached a large bough just beneath them, foaming with rage: they would fain have spared her, but it was not possible. She made no effort to retreat, received several shots without appearing to feel them; and never for a moment relaxed her grasp, or her threatening attitude, till pierced to the brain by one of Herbert's fatal balls, she fell lifeless by the side of her shaggy lord—faithful unto death.

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## CHAPTER V.

WHEN Captain Daunton saw a supply of fresh meat for his crew, which so far exceeded his hopes, he became forthwith quite reconciled to Herbert's expedition,—so much so that he listened to the episode of the lions with good-humoured interest. The welfare of his men was always uppermost in Daunton's thoughts, and they knew it, though he was no popularity hunter.

All looked with admiration upon the shaggy spoils of the noble animals, who had so fearlessly and so fatally to themselves, broken in



upon the operations of the deer-hunters, after having been so strangely unkennelled, and brought into notice by Mr. Tandy, who but for his guardian angel Chouchow, would certainly have been involved in their tragic fate.

“Well, well, Herbert,” said the Captain, “you got well out of the scrape it’s true, but you must admit that the precautions I insisted upon were none too many; for had you rashly bivouacked your party on the ground, the owners of those formidable-looking hides might have had the best of the fight. Why, your friend Mr. Tandy would have been no more to that shaggy monster than a mouse to a cat. But how did you contrive to keep that boy quiet in the midst of such an uproar. I could have sworn that he would have compromised himself at least, or more probably the whole party.”

This remark rather startled Herbert, who began to suspect that the Captain had received some hint of Mr. Tandy’s adventure, all men-

tion of which it was Herbert's wish to suppress; for though Tandy not unfrequently annoyed him, he always shielded the boy, and helped him out of his scrapes as much as he could, which we could only account for by believing that Herbert himself had been a very great Pickle in his days of middyism, and indeed we have lately heard that it was so.

"There is still enough of the land-wind left, Mr. Marliner, to give us an offing," said the Captain. "I believe," he resumed, "we are about a hundred leagues to the southward of Mozambique."

"Rather more than a hundred leagues, sir," replied the Master.

"Weigh and make sail to the northward, Mr. Herbert," said the Captain. "I think by hauling well off the land, we shall get the sea-breeze earlier and fresher."

The Petrel weighed, and having hauled off a few miles from the land, steered for Mozam-

bique under a cloud of canvas, whilst her crew, refreshed and invigorated by an ample supply of wholesome food and pure water, soon forgot past privations.

“Who have we, Herbert, that knows Mozambique?” said the Captain.

“I was once there as a boy,” replied the First Lieutenant, “in the old Rattlesnake, sir. She was about our draught of water. The harbour is well enough for vessels of our size, when you are in it, though difficult of approach, but the immense mud-banks, exposed to a burning sun when the tide is out, must make it unhealthy.”

“I do not intend to take the ship in,” replied the Captain, “but you can go in with a boat, for information. If there are any pirates in these seas, they must know it, as their commerce would be sure to suffer. For my part, after having been so often deceived by rumours of pirates, I have no faith in this one.”

Although our little Petrel appeared like a mere speck on the wide waters, there were several distinct communities and sections of communities within her, each occupied with its own duties, its own hopes, anxieties, and expectations, but all feeding as heartily, when they could procure the means, and all sleeping as soundly when off duty, as if they had not been navigating without charts or chronometers a sea of which they knew little or nothing, except that it abounded in coral reefs, and was notorious for strong and variable currents, the Petrel having on one occasion been carried ninety miles to the northward in twenty-four hours, in a dead calm.

“Come ! come ! Mr. Tandy, none of your tricks,” said our friend Darby Darcie instinctively, for it was quite dark in the berth, when he had been suddenly awakened by a splash of salt-water in his face, as he was lying fast asleep on the locker, with his mouth open. “It’s a hard enough couch I’m on, for though

they do say that a deal plank is softer than oak, devil a difference could I ever find worth speaking about, though I have tried them both many a time. But faith, there's neither peace nor quiet wid you, Mr. Tandy, since you took to riding lions."

"Confound the lions, Darcie. Am I never to hear the last o' that nonsense? The Captain will be getting hold of it soon. It's all jealousy, because you were not let go; but never mind, dear boy, I'll ask for you next time; though I do believe that Herbert has had private instructions to keep the sweet child from getting into harm's way."

"Do you know, Somers," said Darby, who did not like this last insinuation, for he had really begun to suspect that his mother had done something of the sort, "that when Tandy fell out of the tree at the report of Herbert's great gun, the lion being directly under him, with his huge barn-door of a mouth wide open, the poor little fellow went slap

down head first into it, and if Chouchow had not sprung off the tree after him as quick as lightning, and dragged him out by the heels before the big baste had time to close his jaws upon him, it would have been all up with our gallant little friend. At least this is what I heard in the gun-room after dinner to-day.”

“I’m astonished to hear you talk such nonsense, Darcie,” retorted his irritable friend, “but you are jealous, my smock-faced boy.”

“Well, Tandy, if I’m not all eyes, nose, and teeth, and can’t boast of a copper-coloured complexion, like some people, it’s my misfortune, and not my fault, you know. But give us your own version of the tale; for they do say in the gun-room that Chou took you up in his mouth as a cat does a kitten, and leaped up into the tree with you, as if you weighed nothing, just as that poor mad lioness came rushing into play; and that she had all but clutched both Chou and you. I refused at

first to believe this disparaging account, but every body vouched for it. Will you tell us how it really was; or shall we send for Chou-chow to tell us?"

"The dear boy is angry and jealous," retorted Tandy; "but never mind, dear, it shall go another time, whether its mamma likes it or not."

"Well, Tandy," replied his good-humoured friend, "I hadn't fair play last time, or I might have had a ride on the lion too. Wait till it comes to boarding the pirates, then see if Darby doesn't take the shine out of you; for go I will, if I'm obliged to hint to Herbert what is said on that subject."

"Let us defer the dispute, Darby, till that day shall come; when if any one does get the start of me, Darby Darcie will be the man; but we'll have a try for it, Darby. Hallo, what's all that upon deck?"

The boys, as well as everybody else, rushed upon deck.

The ship had been running to the northward under all plain sail, with a five-knot breeze on the starboard beam, when the lookout man aloft suddenly exclaimed, "Rocks under the ship's bottom!"

In fact, the ship was upon a large coral-reef. Rocks were distinctly visible through the transparent water beneath her, and in every direction around her, though there was no land in sight, and no bottom had been found with fifty fathoms of line a few minutes before.

The Master leaped into the starboard-chains, to take the soundings with his own hand. "And a half seven," cried the Quartermaster in the larboard chains at the same moment.

"Brace up, haul aft, ready about!" exclaimed the Captain. "Port the helm, down with it," he continued. "Steady up the head bowlines."

By this time Herbert, who had been in the hold, was on deck.



“We were steering north-north-east,” he said.

“Yes,” replied Marliner from the chains; “quarter less five,” he added. “We are shoaling fast; but she is nearly head to wind, and is losing her way.”

“Mainsail haul—up mainsail,” cried Herbert.

“If she comes round without taking the rocks, which I think she will do now,” said the Captain, “keep her south-south-west; where there was water enough for us to come in, there will be water enough for us to get out.”

“Quarter less four,” sang the Quartermaster. The Captain and Herbert looked at each other.

“What have you now, Marliner?”

“And a half three,” replied the Master, “and much less close a-head.”

“Of all haul,” exclaimed Herbert, and the head-yards flew round; “right the helm,” he added.

And as he did so, her heel grated upon the coral. It was a moment of intense anxiety and dead silence. The ship's head was now towards the right point, but it was very doubtful whether she would be able to gather way, or whether her heel had taken too firm a hold of the rocks to permit her to move.

"All hands forward on the bowsprit and forecastle," said the Captain.

Whether the weight thus suddenly thrown forward turned the scale, by bringing her down by the head, we know not, but Marliner, who stood in the chains, with the lead on the bottom, and the line in his hand, instantly said,—

"She's drawing a-head, sir."

The surface of the reef beneath the ship bore some resemblance to a miniature grove petrified. The light coral grated beneath her; but she continued to gather way.

"We are deepening our water, sir," said Marliner.

“Quarter less five,” sang once more the Quartermaster in the larboard chains cheerfully; and with a slight occasional scrape from some projecting point of coral, they now launched rapidly into deep water.

In a quarter of an hour the ship was out of soundings, having narrowly escaped shipwreck, in broad daylight, with no default of vigilance. Such are coral-reefs out of sight of land. Anchors afford no security on coral ground.

In half an hour everything had reverted to its usual course, and the little incident of the day was altogether forgotten.

Mr. Chouchow having upon more than one occasion appeared rather prominently amongst our *dramatis personæ*, and it being evident, from the prompt and energetic character of that eccentric personage, as well as from his peculiar position in the ship, which brought him so much in contact with our young Mid-dies, that he may hereafter come forward

somewhat conspicuously with or without leave, we wish to give some account of this singular, but by no means fictitious character, who did really exist, and did also bear that very odd name. His age might have been about eighteen, but he did not know his age, and had never known his parents. He was a little below the middle height, thickset, and quite as stout-limbed as was consistent with an extraordinary degree of agility. He was very dark, but evidently from exposure, without any mixture of dark blood, with a round bullet-head, with short, thick, coarse black hair. His countenance, though plain, was intelligent and pleasing, while indicating a rough untutored spirit.

Chouchow's account of his birth, parentage, and education was quite unostentatious and extremely concise ; he assumed to have been born under a gun, and bred in the galley, and like many other people, he appeared to be much attached to the scenes of his early

youth ; which was, perhaps, one reason for his finding himself so much in his element, as midshipmen's factotum. We have already alluded to the various duties comprehended in that office, with respect to the Mids in general ; but as these multifarious occupations were not sufficient to exhaust the mighty energies of Chouchow, it was his habit to attach himself, quite gratuitously and disinterestedly, to some one of his younger masters, with great devotion ; though, like many other extraordinary characters, he was somewhat fickle and capricious in bestowing his patronage, transferring his valuable services, sometimes rather abruptly, from one to another, in a very decided manner, though Darby Darcie, who was a boy after Chou's own heart, kind, generous, grateful, and confiding, had been so long in the ascendant, that his reign had come to be considered as permanently established. Chouchow had been accustomed to address Darby as Master, and to speak of him as the

Master ; and these were no empty unmeaning words. All the Master's wants or wishes had been attended to with a degree of zeal and unceasing assiduity highly convenient and agreeable to an idle, indolent, and negligent boy, like our friend Darby ; who was legally entitled to only one-sixth part of the leisure time of this servant of many masters, in such multifarious duties. And well pleased had Darby been to be saved the trouble of bothering himself about personal or domestic affairs ; all which Chouchow had long since taken upon himself.

The good nature and native humour of Darby, which made him a general favourite, had long fixed even the fickle Chou ; which, as poor Darby was blessed with little prudence or foresight, and was, moreover, inclined to be generous as well as careless, both in season and out of season, the habit of casting all his cares upon Chou, and of relying upon him in all his necessities, had

made that individual a sort of tutelary genius to him—a crutch to lean upon, at all times ; and Darby used it so constantly and so confidently, that it was not easy for him, now, to get on without it.

But Chouchow, who had always admired Tandy, had been captivated by the cool unflinching audacity of that hopeful youth, as lately displayed upon two trying occasions ; and moved moreover, though he was not aware of it, by the fact that he, Chou, had twice saved the life of that saucy and presumptuous specimen of middyism, to the great benefit of the world in general, and of Old England in particular : he, Chouchow, thus tempted, did suddenly transfer his allegiance, or patronage, with all its privileges, immunities, and advantages, from the hapless Darby Darcie, who really wanted it, to the triumphant Mr. Tandy, who was perfectly capable of taking care of himself, and accustomed to watch over his own personal

interests, with equal judgment and perseverance.

Darby, who really suffered a severe loss by the caprice of Mr. Chou, was so entirely free from envy or jealousy, that he joined heartily and honestly in the uproarious laugh, caused by that official's first public act of homage to his new Master ; and he congratulated his friend Tandy cordially upon so important an acquisition. Nor did he, in any way, show anger or displeasure towards the delinquent himself ; circumstances which probably made a deep impression upon Chouchow's mind, fickle and capricious though he was.

The following morning found the Petrel off Mozambique, with its shallow and circumscribed harbour, well sheltered by extensive shoals around its narrow entrance ; but although it appeared at high water to be of great extent, the only anchorage for ships of any burden is close under the walls of the old castle, coeval apparently with a very early stage of the short-



lived supremacy of Portugal in these seas. It is a respectable-looking affair at a distance, and commands the entrance of the harbour; but it is a place of no strength in these days.

"A boat coming off from the shore, sir," reported the officer of the watch to the Captain, whilst Herbert was receiving his instructions from him previous to landing for information.

A large government barge, with the Portuguese flag flying, now rapidly approached, with several sitters, one of them a military officer. A very gentlemanly aide-de-camp of the Governor-General of Mozambique presented himself on the quarter-deck, with an English interpreter.

"Don Jose Maria di Mello di Casabianca," said the officer through his interpreter, "presents his compliments to the Captain of His Majesty's ship, and offers him such supplies as the colony can afford. He hopes the Captain will enter the harbour, and has sent his best pilot to take the ship in."

Due compliments having been returned, the following dialogue ensued, the Captain asking, "What do you know about pirates in these seas?"

"Two schooners armed and full of men have been committing great ravages and cruelties. Of the largest heavily armed pirate our accounts are not so certain, but the smaller one has captured and destroyed several of our coasters, treating the crews with great barbarity. A Portuguese brig from Rio having made some resistance, they murdered the whole crew, one man excepted, and sent him here with an insolent defiance."

"Where is this man who has been with them?"

"He is up the country with the captain of an English ship, which arrived from the Cape yesterday. Mr. Brine, the Abyssinian traveller, who is proceeding in her to the Red Sea, is also up the country."

"What distance up the country?"

“If the ship will come into harbour, the Governor will send off expresses and have them all down in two days; and Manoel, the man who was taken by the pirates, shall go to sea with you. He is a good pilot for the coast, and speaks English.”

“Umph,” said the Captain, “we must have this man, and get the Cape news from Mr. Brine. We know him, and yet incalculable mischief may be done in these two days, Herbert?”

“It is quite possible, sir, but to go to work in the dark when such important information may be acquired, and such a pilot as this Manoel, would I think scarcely be wise, but as you please, sir.”

“No, Herbert, that is precisely what it is not; for if I could do as I pleased I would go after these pirates at once—but Manoel we must have.”

Then, through the interpreter, he told the Aide-de-camp that he would take the Petrel

into the harbour, and would have the pleasure of waiting upon his Excellency.

The Portuguese boat returned, and soon after the ship bore up under the pilot's guidance for the harbour. The Petrel was soon moored close under the castle wall, which overtopped her masthead, making her berth very hot and close, not only from the reflection of the sun from the huge line of dead wall, but because the sea-breeze could only blow home in puffs, unless it was unusually strong.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of the Governor-General, who was a well-informed agreeable man, of high rank. Some small supplies were procured, but the island produced nothing, and the neighbouring country very little, but oranges, citrons, guavas, cocoanuts, and yams. Its inhabitants drew most of their own supplies from Madagascar.

There was a grand dinner given to the English officers that afternoon, at the castle. The attendants were slaves, and many of them

wore showy dresses, having their arms and ancles ornamented with large silver bangles. Royal salutes were fired as the health of the monarchs of the two countries were drunk, and the utmost hilarity prevailed, for his Excellency was a cheerful, hospitable bon vivant.

The means of communication among the party were, however, inconveniently limited. Captain Dauntton was no linguist, his Excellency spoke Italian, and Herbert had picked up some little knowledge of that language in the Mediterranean; the Doctor and the Aide-de-camp both spoke a little French, and thus they got on pretty well.

“Herbert,” whispered the Captain, late in the afternoon, “he’s a monstrous good fellow, this governor, but he wants to come on board the Petrel. I’m afraid I must ask him to dinner to-morrow.”

This fancy of the Captain’s was the grand mistake of the evening. His Excellency had certainly from mere politeness expressed a

wish to visit His Majesty's ship, but nothing could be farther from his intention than to dine there.

"I must ask him," resumed the Captain, aside, to his First Lieutenant, "but I hope to Heaven he won't come. What do you think? he looks like a sensible man."

"He is certainly a superior man, sir," replied Herbert, "but I think rather ceremonious, and if he does come, there will be space enough on the quarter deck, under the awning, with plenty of flags. The Doctor and I can make something of them in French and Italian, and perhaps Brine may arrive in time to help us."

The invitation to dine on board the Petrel next day was given, to the great distress of his Excellency, who detested ships, having made more than one voyage in ships of his own country, which had left no pleasing recollections. He was a stout, sturdy bon vivant, who rarely quitted the spacious airy halls of

his castle, unless it was to visit a countryhouse equally well adapted to the climate, to which he was conveyed in a state barge, well-cushioned and protected from the sun. He loved his ease and elbow-room, and above all, cool, lofty spacious rooms, with a current of air ; and when that failed, the glorious punkah. Still he accepted the invitation so smilingly, that the Captain was delighted that he had asked him.

Everybody having been pleased with his Excellency and his hospitality, and anxious for the honour of the Petrel, great and successful efforts were made to furnish forth the feast.

The professional skill of Danvers having been laid under contribution by his Excellency's chief domestic, the Doctor, with his accustomed sagacity, availed himself of that circumstance not only to ascertain what were the favourite viands of the great man, but also to get his head cook conveyed on board pri-

vately to prepare them. This was a master-stroke ; and all were in high spirits on the morning of the feast, the Amphytrion and his chief guest excepted, who both in their hearts detested the whole affair, although from very different motives.

It was as usual a fine bright day, and the preparations were progressing satisfactorily, when lo! about noon, there fell suddenly a shower of rain, as it was called at Mozambique, though in old England it would have figured as a deluge, and furnished a leading article for half the provincial papers in the kingdom.

“ ’Tis too heavy to last, sir,” said Herbert, as he entered the cabin, for the laudable purpose of attempting to cheer up his disconsolate commander. “ There’s the sun out again,” he resumed—for the lofty battlements beneath which they lay, totally obscured one half of the horizon, and unluckily that was the windward half. The sun did indeed, at that instant, suddenly flash forth in full meridian



splendour ; and the sodden, half-drowned ship absolutely sent up a reeking cloud of steam.

Again a dark truculent cloud emerged from behind that abominable wall, and once more the waters poured down upon them and their quarter-deck preparations, like a cataract. And thus did these alternations of heavy tropical rains, and a burning African sun, continue to play at bo-peep from behind the horrible wall, till the Captain and his First Lieutenant were at their wits' end, for how could it be possible to carry out the feast.

Little did our embarrassed friends imagine that his Excellency was watching the course of events, with a degree of dismay almost equal to their own, in deep consultation with his Aide-de-camp and Secretary, as to the propriety of sending an excuse. But he knew that great preparations had been made ; he was a gentlemanly, kind-hearted man, and, as Herbert had hinted, punctilious withal ; so he came to the conclusion, that though it was a

terrible bore, he would not disappoint the English Captain.

In heavy rain, a deep-waisted, corvette-built ship, is very like a house without a roof, in which there is only one habitable floor, which receives neither light nor air, but what may be procured from skylights and trap-doors in the ceiling. This was precisely the condition of the Petrel, for upon her only habitable deck there was neither port-hole, scuttle, nor window of any sort,—no possible admission for light or air, but from four hatchways; and now that she lay in a confined harbour, close under a high wall which excluded the sea-breeze,—one hundred and thirty persons living and sleeping upon that one deck, closely packed together, in an atmosphere which made breathing a labour, it was not in this, the hottest part of the world, exactly the pleasantest place for a dinner party.

But when torrents of rain compel the partial closure of the hatchways, sadly reducing the

quantum of air, already so scanty, without by any means excluding the water, with a hot burning sun occasionally breaking out, matters become still worse, and all below the deck becomes a vapour-bath,

To serve the dinner in the Captain's cabin with little light and less air, was hardly feasible. Its height under the beams was only five feet six inches ; a fixed table in the centre would only accommodate six persons, and even then there was not a clear space sufficient to allow the servants to pass round. Yet to serve it on the quarter-deck, in such weather, was clearly impossible.

Four o'clock was the dinner hour ; at three down came another torrent of rain.

Herbert and Danvers were summoned to council in the cabin.

"What can be done, Mr. Herbert?" said the perplexed Captain. "If the rain would continue to pour down thus, there would be some hope that his Excellency would send an excuse."

Herbert shook his head.

“Those abominable half-hours of sunshine between the showers destroy all hope of that, sir ; but were it otherwise, he is punctilious, and would make it a point of honour to come.”

“What a fool I was to ask him !” resumed the Captain pettishly.

“To dine on deck will be impossible,” resumed Herbert, without disputing the Captain’s opinion upon the subject of the invitation ; “our awnings are so old and worn that they keep out no wet. You might as well entertain his Excellency in a shower-bath as on the quarter-deck.”

“Time presses,” said Danvers ; “dinner must be served here in the cabin. It will be hot work, but there is nothing else for it.”

“Impossible !” replied the Captain. “Why, we shall be ten at dinner, and no more than six can sit at table here.”

“I must agree with the Doctor, sir,” said Herbert,—“you have no choice. The Gover-

nor's party will be only three, and your own officers will resign their seats, and that will reduce your number to six, and if it will only hold up so that you can keep your guests upon deck whilst dinner is put on the table, all will go well yet."

The Captain shrugged his shoulders with an air of resignation, and the order was given, for they had now no time to lose.

Fortune favoured them; at four the sun shone brightly. His Excellency was punctual. He came in great state, dressed in a rich uniform, with orders, attended by his Aide-de-camp and Secretary. He was received by a guard of marines, and with a salute, all the officers of the ship attending in full uniform. During these ceremonies they were hastening the dinner upon the table, whilst both the Governor and his anxious host took a glance occasionally at the top of the battlements, where a dark, heavy, ragged-edged cloud, had begun to show his threatening visage. It

advanced rapidly, and it was a near thing, but the company were fortunately seated at table before the torrent descended ; and although they had some difficulty in understanding each other, it was quite clear that they all felt what a very narrow escape they had made from a thorough drenching.

His Excellency seemed to be rather surprised at the Lilliputian dimensions of the apartment, by which, indeed, being a tall man, he was somewhat incommoded ; but he was evidently determined to be pleased.

He had, no doubt, entertained some misgivings about the Captain's cuisine, but he had no sooner tasted the potage than all his apprehensions upon that score vanished. Influenced perhaps also by the unmistakeable odour of garlic sent forth from every dish upon the table, his jolly good-humoured face became quite radiant ; though the pungency of that same odour somewhat discomposed both the *Amphitryon* and his English guests.

It was hot work, and unluckily the champagne had imbibed an undue proportion of caloric. Both these evils were, however, cheerfully submitted to, and the scantiness of their means of communication produced little inconvenience during dinner. The dessert once upon the table, the Captain rose and proposed His Majesty's health, which was drunk with great enthusiasm, and was immediately followed by a royal salute.

It is not possible to convey to the uninitiated reader an adequate notion of the effect of twenty-one 32-pounders, fired in slow succession, upon the sense of hearing of a party congregated in a close but loosely constructed compartment of so small and so slightly built a ship as our Petrel—old, too, withal. Hands flew up instinctively to ears. But dust, fragments of pitch from the seams, and clouds of frightened fat cockroaches, issuing from every cranny, assailed the heads and faces of the guests, covering the plates and dishes, which with the

glasses and decanters danced upon the table, as it shook to each separate explosion ; whilst the constantly accumulating smoke almost blinded every body, and what a hot sulphureous atmosphere did they breathe, whilst they gaped at each other's hot and blackened faces, as one by one the horrid guns went off. And no sooner had they ceased, than the battery over their heads on shore took up the ball and repeated the salute.

Though a brave and loyal subject, it was with a flushed countenance, and painful forebodings, that his Excellency soon after heard the health of his own sovereign proposed, and the whole party forthwith underwent the second infliction with much more equanimity ; they were getting used to it. But even after the last horrible gun had shaken and deafened them, the increased accumulation of sulphureous smoke almost choked them ; for as the rain was splashing in torrents upon the deck above, the smoke could not escape, and the partial opening



of the skylight seemed to admit more of the rain than of fresh air. It was the black hole of Calcutta, with the addition of the smoke.

His Excellency stood all this nobly. At length the time fixed for his departure had arrived; he had unflinchingly performed the trying duties of the day, greatly as they had been aggravated by unforeseen circumstances, and he was entitled to retire with honour.

But, alas! a fresh deluge had commenced. To remain was terrible, but to get away was impossible; for whoever in that climate should have ventured, red hot as they all were, to have exposed himself to that chilling drenching night torrent, would in all probability have been consigned to the land crabs next morning. The foreign guests looked at each other in mute but eloquent despair.

“Confound it!” broke out the Captain. “Herbert—Doctor—do say something to his Excellency about stripping, or we shall all be

stified to death in full uniform, buttoned up to the chin."

Herbert, however, had good reasons for hesitation. His smattering of Italian had served him pretty well for a toast or a compliment; but to call upon a Governor-General to strip, was a very different matter, and he boggled.

"Comment?" said the Aide-de-camp to the Doctor.

"Que veut il dire," prompted thereto by a hint in Portuguese from his chief, who appeared anxious to know what could be meant.

"Il propose," replied Manvers, hesitatingly, like a man who had to look for his words, "que nous nous débarrassons de nos uniformes, à cause de la chaleur étouffante."

Whether his Excellency, who had a quick eye, had guessed the purport of the Doctor's words from his gesticulations, or whether some impatient but expressive movement on the Captain's part, had enlightened him, may be doubted. Certain it is that, without waiting

for his Aide-de-camp's interpretation, he began to throw off his rich uniform, coat, decorations, and all, as well as a tight black stock, with great energy of manner; an example which was instantaneously followed by the whole party, who thus joyfully rushed from the suffocating extreme of buttoned-up etiquette to the freedom of short sleeves, amidst roars of laughter, for their recent sufferings had spoken in a language equally intelligible to them all.

But in the midst of this explosion of merriment, the unexpected entrance of Mr. Brine attracted all eyes. That gentleman, however, paused for one moment in his advance towards Captain Daunton, and drew himself up in evident astonishment to find so many grave dignitaries at a formal entertainment abandoned to noisy mirth, in such an extraordinary *dés-habille*, contrasting so strangely with the royal salutes in honour of their dignified conviviality, which he had distinctly heard some distance from the ship.

Brine was a man of the world; his hesitation had been but momentary: but all had immediately returned to gravity and decorum.

“God be praised, Captain Daunton!” said Mr. Brine, with deep feeling, “God be praised, sir, that I find you here. No words can express what I have suffered since we arrived at Mozambique!”

The gloomy expression of his countenance, naturally so cheerful, his excited manner, and the faltering tone of his voice, were alarming to those who knew the careless easy-going character and habits of the traveller.

Captain Daunton took his hand and pointed to a chair, expressing his gratification at seeing him so soon.

“I have ridden night and day,” replied Mr. Brine, “from the instant on which, through his Excellency’s kindness, I received the news of your arrival. Manoel was with

me, and will be here before daylight. My tale is soon told."

The suffocating heat of that crowded little cabin, and all the tragic-comic incidents of the last few hours, were at once forgotten, as all listened with intense interest, anxious to hear what could have so painfully excited the cool and experienced traveller; though they were very far from anticipating such a statement as that which their old acquaintance now proceeded to make.

"When we left the Cape little more than a fortnight since," he said, "purposing to touch here, on our way to the Red Sea, nothing had been heard of pirates in the Mozambique channel. Two extra Indiamen, which had brought out troops and stores to the Cape, were preparing to proceed to India through this passage. Colonel Darcie had sailed with his regiment for Bombay three months before; but the illness of his youngest daughter at that time had compelled Mrs. Darcie and her

children to remain at the Cape, where they had been for some time awaiting an eligible opportunity to follow him.

“They had taken a passage in the largest of these two ships, the *Thames*, and were to sail a few days after us. Judge of my horror, gentlemen, when I learned on my arrival here, that we must have had a narrow escape from falling into the hands of a set of ferocious miscreants, chiefly men of colour. The ravages they have committed, and their cruelty to all those who have fallen into their hands, Manoel will describe to you, as an eye-witness of it. Their great object is to cut off an English Indiaman. Their larger vessel was said to have proceeded to Bembatooka for supplies. She is described as being heavily armed, and commanded by a European monster, guilty habitually of every species of crime and cruelty.

“The smaller vessel, a schooner, has passed to the northward of this island, ranging the

African coast to pick up Portuguese coasters. She is, I believe, wholly manned with blacks."

Mr. Brine paused from excess of agitation, whilst his auditors sat horror-struck.

"It is impossible to guess whereabouts the Thames may be," he resumed, "but the probability is, that she has not yet passed this part of the coast, and consequently that she is so far safe. Of that you will be the best judge, Captain Dauntton. But that our amiable friend, Mrs. Darcie, with her lovely daughter, and our dear little Emma, should be exposed to the possibility of falling into the power of such wretches, makes my blood run cold."

Herbert covered his face with his hands, his whole frame shuddered convulsively; all was grief and consternation.

The kind-hearted Governor, who comprehended the horrible apprehensions of his new friends for the fate of those so inexpressibly

dear to them, retired with as little parade as possible.

Captain Daunton, Herbert, and Mr. Brine remained in close consultation. Marliner was sent for with the log-book; distances from place to place were measured upon their wretched chart. The prevailing winds for the last fortnight were accurately ascertained, every element of calculation was carefully collected and worked out, but the results afforded no data upon which it might be possible to guess, within a hundred miles, whereabouts the Thames and her consort might then be.

“It is pretty clear,” observed Herbert, whose whole soul was on the subject, “that the Thames can hardly have passed to the northward of us yet. And as we know from Manoel that the smaller pirate is gone to the northward, whilst Bembatooka, where the larger one is said to be, is also considerably to the northward of us, the natural inference



is, that the rendezvous at which they are to meet is also to the north, perhaps in the latitude of Table Cape, which marks the entrance to Bembatooka, on a line between Mozambique and Joanna, which is obviously their best cruising ground."

In this opinion all concurred, but there was little consolation in it; for although it suggested the best mode of proceeding, yet it was but too obvious that the chance of the pirates escaping the Petrel in so wide a channel was greatly in their favour; whilst the possibility that one or other of the buccaneering vessels should fall in with the Thames was a terrible consideration, sadly enhanced by their uncertainty at that moment whether the Thames might be to the northward or to the southward of them; for upon this momentous point all was mere conjecture.

It was impossible to get out of the harbour in the dark, from the intricacy of the shoals around its entrance, but every preparation was

made for starting as soon as the pilot could see his way sufficiently to take charge of her, and she was warped close up to the harbour's mouth.

Manoel arrived during the night. He was a great acquisition, but of course he could throw no light upon the present position of the Thames, upon which so much depended.

Few of the officers of the Petrel slept much that night. Mr. Brine remained with them till the last moment. Poor Herbert's mind was a chaos of hopes and fears.

Darby Darcie had fortunately been sleeping in preparation for the middle watch when Brine had arrived; and although everybody around him knew more or less of the danger of his family, he was kept as long as possible in a happy state of ignorance upon that painful subject.

The Petrel, once at sea, steered a direct course for Joanna, but under her topsails only. There was great danger in advancing too

hastily in such a painful state of uncertainty; for it was impossible to guess whether they were advancing towards or receding from the Thames, and her inestimable freight. But to remain in the immediate vicinity of the island of Mozambique would have been to throw up all hope. No outward-bound ship approaches that island.

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## CHAPTER VI.

IN one of the many excellent houses in Cape Town, and the master of which, who held a responsible and lucrative public appointment, was remarkable for his hospitality, as was his fair wife for every quality that does honour to the sex, two ladies were seated in a morning-room, and with them an arch and lively girl, about seven years of age.

“My dear Mrs. Darcie,” said the lady of the house, in one of those soft sweet voices which possess such winning power, “I am sorry you should think of leaving us. I shall miss

my little playfellow here, and Norah is the light of the house. I have not ventured to mention the subject to Mr. Vaughan, for I still hope you will alter your plan, and give us a little more of your company. Surely you should remain here till we hear of the Colonel's arrival in India. Norah," continued Mrs. Vaughan to her young favourite, who just then joined the party, "you must take part with me, and protest against your mamma's going away so soon."

Mrs. Darcie's reply was cut short by January's announcement of Major Singleton and Captain O'Gorman; the first a tall dashing-looking officer on the Governor's Staff, the latter a relative of the Darcies.

"There is a cruel report, Mrs. Vaughan," said the lively little Captain, "which I have just heard, and I am very desirous to ascertain that there is no foundation for it; for, 'pon my honour, it's heartbreaking. The whole garrison is in commotion."

“Are the Caffres coming down upon us? Do pray be more explicit,” said the hostess.

“Faith, it’s the ladies that must be explicit this time,” resumed the Captain. “If it rested with the gentlemen to speak out, there’d be no danger of such a misfortune.”

“I fear, my dear madam,” said the Major, whose tone was much more serious than that of his volatile friend, “I fear, Mrs. Darcie, from your countenance, that the report of your proceeding forthwith to India in this ship is but too correct.”

Mrs. Darcie smiled sadly. She had a great horror of the sea, especially without the Colonel, and she was fondly attached to Mrs. Vaughan, who, seeing that her friend was not disposed to reply, drew the conversation upon herself.

“I was urging our dear Mrs. Darcie to give up all thought of leaving us for the present, at least to wait till she had heard of the Colonel’s arrival, and I am glad to find such able support.”

“Faith, madam, if it’s support you want in that matter, I’ll engage for the whole garrison, and the Major will answer for Government-house. Why, my fair cousin, here are the balls just beginning, and the races close at hand. What will we do without you,—especially myself, your unworthy cousin?”

“Remarkably well, I’ve no doubt,” replied Norah laughing. “Though I should like the balls and the races very much, and if I am to be shut up in a ship whilst they are going on, I shall miss them much more than they will miss me.”

Other company came in, and no more was said upon the subject; but whilst the Captain chatted away gaily, the grave and stately Major was silent and thoughtful.

“‘And so, mamma,” said Norah, as soon as she was alone with her mother, “you have determined to embark in this ship at once for India. I shall be sorry to leave Mrs. Vaughan, however much I may wish to see papa.”

“I promised to follow him as soon as I could with safety to Emma, and I am assured that such an opportunity as this rarely offers ; for few ships touch at the Cape on their way to India. I could have wished to see poor dear Darby once more.”

“Poor Darby,” said Norah, with tears in her eyes, “how disappointed he will be when the Petrel returns, to find that we are gone.”

“So will somebody else in the Petrel,” said Emma, who had entered the room unobserved. “Dont you think so, Norah ?”

“You’ll be late for dinner, darling,” said mamma, who, occupied with her own sad thoughts, had not heard Emma’s remark, though Norah had both heard and felt it.

The party at dinner was small. The Major was there, but neither he nor anybody else was in spirits, the host excepted, who was one of a class not quite so numerous now as then. The dinner hour with him was more or less looked forward to all day ; but it was quite as



much with a view to cheerful intercourse and social chat as to the viands or the wines, both of which had, however, a full share of his consideration, and he was an excellent judge of such things. But on this particular day, neither his turtle-soup, his finest wines, nor his best stories, could produce their usual effect, and for once he was not sorry when they were summoned to the ladies.

There is always something dispiriting and dejecting in the breaking up of a little social congenial party. Mrs. Darcie and her hostess were old friends, and much attached. They had met by mere accident in a remote colony, and had enjoyed each other's society exceedingly. Mrs. Vaughan was as a second mother to the girls, and it was but too probable that they should never meet again. These meetings and separations in distant colonies are much more keenly felt than they would be at home, where other friends and local attachments take off the sharp edge of such events.

Colonel Darcie was a distinguished officer and an excellent man, fond of his family, but rather decided, and even somewhat peremptory, in the exercise at least of his paternal authority.

Major Singleton, though younger than Darcie, was his personal friend. They had served much together, and the ladies had been recommended to his especial care and protection in the Colonel's absence. He was on intimate terms with the Vaughans, and had naturally enough spent most of his leisure time at their gay and hospitable mansion whilst the Darcies were there.

The Major was exceedingly well qualified to execute the charge intrusted to him, for he was a sensible, prudent, and honourable man, holding a distinguished post in the Governor's household, and universally respected. But the care and protection of ladies has its dangers as well as its pleasures, and despite all his prudence and good sense, matured

by the experience of thirty-eight years, this somewhat sudden departure of the Darcies first opened his eyes to the fact, that to part with Norah Darcie would be a heart-breaking concern to him. Yet was he most cordially and unreservedly treated by that fair damsel as a representative of her father,—a sort of deputy papa; divested, indeed, of the somewhat oppressive authority of papa himself, but still so decidedly clothed with the paternal character that although he might be to others the handsome, accomplished Major Singleton, Norah, it was quite clear, would as soon have thought of admiring her grandmother.

Mrs. Darcie, who had great and just confidence in her husband's friend, and had long learned to entertain much respect and regard for him, little thought what the poor Major's feelings were when she was continually consulting him about the thousand doubts and difficulties which were constantly alarming

and perplexing her, in the management of an undertaking so entirely new to her, as a long voyage without her husband. Mr. Vaughan, with all his kindness, was wholly useless in such matters, and Norah always made her escape, if possible, when they were under consideration, declaring they were utterly beyond her, and only to be decided by older and wiser heads. And strange as it may appear, this unhappy term from Norah's rosy, laughing lips, almost made the Major believe that he was old, though so many bright eyes and flattering tongues vouched for his youth daily and hourly. It was quite evident, even to himself, that Norah had not dreamed of being personal.

"But so much the worse," said the Major to himself, when reflecting upon this unfortunate speech, "for it is quite clear that it is to her a matter of absolute indifference, whether I am young or old."

Major Singleton, a younger brother, of good

family, with great advantages of person and manner; an unexceptionable character, and a respectable military career, mostly on the Staff, had ever been a general favourite, and as he was of an easy composed temperament, could scarcely be said to have experienced any very material disappointment, or indeed any considerable interruption, to a flattering and prosperous course of life. He was not a marrying man; or if any thoughts of matrimony had ever crossed his mind, they had certainly been connected with vague, indistinct visions of wealth, or rank, or both.

And behold! this sapient man of the world, at a ripe and mature age, was painfully agitated at the thought of losing our gay and pretty Norah, who certainly looked up to him with a sort of half filial deference, upon grave and important subjects, but who evidently, on all minor occasions, was fully as ready to laugh at him as with him.

The poor Major was bound in honour to do

all he could to forward the departure of his unconscious enslaver; and moreover had to hear continually, and unreservedly, from her own artless lips, all the various grounds upon which she regretted leaving the Cape, and which certainly included nothing very flattering to himself personally. The main grievance clearly was, that she should not see the Petrel again; and there would have been nothing in that, as her brother was in that ship; but unfortunately, certain occasional inuendoes of the slyly observant little Emma had more than once reached his ears, and he had seen the blushing girl wince under these provoking speeches of the saucy spoiled child.

When these things recurred to his recollection, in the solitary rides which had all at once become habitual to him, there became awakened, as it were, within his disturbed mind, visions of a certain handsome young officer of the Petrel, who had been very much with the Darcies, and to whom, though he

knew not why, he had taken a most particular dislike. But the Major's reveries, though they interfered very much with his own peace of mind, had no influence upon the progress of Mrs. Darcie's preparations.

"Mamma, Mamma," said Emma, rushing into her mother's room, "old Januarius has just announced Captain Timmins to Mrs. Vaughan. Is not that the Captain of the ship?"

Mrs. Darcie at once descended to the morning room, and entered upon a business conversation with the Captain, a sensible, agreeable, and gentlemanly man, about fifty.

"The cabins, Mrs. Darcie," he said, "are now ready for inspection. Major Singleton talks of going on board with the Flag-Lieutenant, who tells me he is directed by your friend the Admiral to assist your embarkation in every way. I much wish you could be prevailed upon yourself to go on board to-morrow, with these gentlemen; I am very anxious that your accommodation should be fitted to your satisfaction."

Mrs. Darcie felt and acknowledged Captain Timmins' kindness, but she had not spirits for the enterprise. "Her kind friends," she said, "would look at her apartment; and she had full confidence in the Captain's wish to make everything agreeable to her."

"May I ask, Captain Timmins," she said, "what you consider to be the probable duration of the voyage from hence to Bombay?"

"About seven weeks," replied the Captain, "and I am happy to say the Liffey will sail with us. I feared she would not be ready, but I have this morning received an assurance that she will go with us. It is always an object, that a merchant-ship in these seas should have a comrade. There are many advantages in it."

"And what is the latest day you can give us, for we shall want some time for preparation?"

"I am bound to sail this day week, madam, and it is highly advisable that you should



embark the day before, that you may settle into your places, as we sailors express it."

"Pray, Captain Timmins, have we any chance of meeting the Petrel?" asked Norah.

"Should the Petrel happen to be in the Mozambique Channel it will be very probable, else, I fear the chance of meeting her will be very small."

"My daughter is thus anxious to meet the Petrel, Captain Timmins, because her brother is in that ship."

Emma looked up saucily at her sister ; but, luckily, she stood in some awe of the Captain, and said nothing.

"Go, Emma," said Mrs. Darcie, "and tell Susan that I shall not go out this morning."

This, whether intended to be so or not, was a considerable relief to Norah, who stood in some apprehension of Emma's inuendoes.

A week soon passes, when hasty preparations for a long voyage, and receiving fare-

well visits from numerous friends, create constant occupation. The Darcies had been two years at Cape Town, living handsomely, and had largely contributed to the social enjoyments of the place. Though, since the Colonel had left them, they had been the guests of the Vaughans ; so that Mrs. Darcie was, through their kindness, spared the fatigue and annoyance of having to break up an establishment ; a duty so much more appropriately performed by the Colonel himself. They parted from many kind friends with regret ; but to take leave of Mrs. Vaughan was indeed a painful task. It would be difficult to say who felt it most severely at the time, though of course the feeling was deeper and more lasting on the part of the two old friends. Mrs. Darcie's society had been by far the greatest comfort Mrs. Vaughan had experienced, during a long sojourn in that remote but agreeable colony. Her large establishment, and a continued

round of company, had no attractions for her, and the loss of her own two infant children had somewhat hurt her spirits ; but her husband's pleasure was a law to her, and so completely did she exert herself to make his home all he wished it to be, that only the very few who knew her well, entertained any doubt of her love of the trappings of wealth.

Mrs. Darcie was a congenial spirit, and her children absorbed the overflowing affections of the bereaved mother. It would be difficult to say which of these amiable and excellent women suffered most from the separation.

Captain O'Gorman and many others professed their despair at Norah's departure, in good set terms ; for which she laughed at them, with so much wit and humour, that their lamentations always evaporated in hearty laughter, which amused Norah greatly. She was little inclined to the dolefuls, under any circumstances, and all affectations of the kind

were mercilessly detected and exposed by her. But with the Major it was quite a different matter. His assiduity to serve them, in every possible way, was earnest and unceasing ; but he paid no compliments, professed no grief ; he was grave, pale, punctilious, and altogether an altered man.

Mrs. Darcie feared he was ill. Norah was sorry to hear that her mother thought so, but she had not herself observed it.

The last day had arrived, and everything was embarked but themselves. An early dinner was ordered by their disconsolate hostess, and all their friends had retired, except Major Singleton. Both Mrs. Darcie and Mrs. Vaughan were too much occupied with their own regrets to observe him. It was natural that he should remain to overlook and arrange everything for them, to the last moment. Norah had cried as if her heart was breaking, at a solemn leave-taking of Mrs. Vaughan, who was too much affected to

be able to leave her own room. Mrs. Darcie had gone up stairs, for one more last word with her dear friend.

Norah and the Major were left alone, in the morning room ; and she was within two short hours to embark for India. He should very probably never see her again ; nay, the first thing he should hear of her would, he doubted not, be that she had married, or had become engaged to some happy man. Woe be to the wise and the prudent who rashly expose themselves to such trials !

Norah had wiped away her tears ; that April face was again radiant with mental sunshine.

“ You care but little for leaving us,” he said.

“ Indeed, I am very sorry to leave you,” replied the frank and single-minded girl ; meaning exactly what she said, and nothing more.

Whether the recent flood of sorrow, elicited

by the truly maternal affection of Mrs. Vaughan, in their late conference, had given an unusual degree of pathos to that deep soft voice, or whether the difference existed solely in the Major's excited imagination, certain it is that he felt or imagined that there was something unusual, something touching, in the very simple expression of regret at parting which Norah had uttered.

"Is it possible," he said, "that you really feel sorrow at this parting?"

"I should be very ungrateful else," said the young girl, utterly unconscious that every word she spoke, nay, the tone of every syllable, vibrated on the heart-strings of the man before her.

The room, as is the custom at the Cape, was very imperfectly lighted. She did not see the agitation of his countenance and manner, she merely saw her father's friend, for whose kindness and attention to her mother and herself she felt very grateful; and his recent services

had greatly raised him in her opinion. He was to her a kind and valuable friend, but nothing more.

“This parting,” said the Major, scarcely knowing what he said, and certainly not aware that he had spoken audibly, “is dreadful!”

Norah thought it very odd.

“It must not, it shall not be!” resumed the love-stricken swain. A short pause ensued, and Norah began to be frightened; ’twas so odd! She approached the open door of the room, which led to a large hall, also very scantily lighted, whilst the dark-coloured beams overhead cast a gloom upon both rooms,—for there are no ceilings to the houses in Cape Town, the beams being wholly exposed to view, as well as the floor they support, and covered with a dark varnish.

Whether perceiving that she was slowly approaching the door, as if to escape, or whatever might excite the frantic impulse, this prudent, sensible, dignified man rushed forward,

and was on the point of throwing himself at the feet of a gay, lively, but half-terrified girl of seventeen, who stood looking at him with utter amazement.

A terrible crash was heard, as if some twenty magazines had gone off in a volley. The house shook violently, the walls separated, and daylight was visible through two upper corners of the room. A silence ensued, so profound after this horrid crash, that it was awful. Then shrieks and lamentations were heard in all directions, and footsteps in wild haste. A huge beam fell between the Major and the bewildered Norah, as both stood statuelike with amazement. It occupied the entire space between them, but touched them not. It was an earthquake!

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## CHAPTER VII.

NORAH soon recovered her presence of mind sufficiently to avail herself of the open door near which she had been standing. She saw that the Major was unhurt; and as his prudence and foresight had been continually vaunted in her presence, she conceived some confused idea that his very odd conduct at that moment must have proceeded from his anticipation of the danger to which they were all on the point of being exposed. Could the Major have known the state of Norah's feelings upon this subject, it would have relieved

him from overwhelming anxiety, and no small degree of self-humiliation. The subject had been with her one of light and passing interest, and was already forgotten, in anxiety for her dear friends amidst such a scene of terror and confusion, as both her eyes and her ears now bore witness to.

Her worst apprehensions were soon calmed ; for the whole family, rushing from various parts of the house, met in the hall, and proceeded, under the advice and guidance of Mr. Vaughan, into the street, and thence to the Company's Gardens, as it was felt to be unsafe to remain near buildings, most of which had been more or less shaken and injured, though none had fallen.

Earthquakes, like other wonders, have now become so common, that the diary of a lady traveller contains the following entry, "Earthquakes as usual." Here, however, they were rarely experienced, and never had been attended with much loss of life, though with

considerable destruction of property ; so that when every one had found self and friends safe and sound, and people began to question each other leisurely as to their various adventures and experiences, there was much laughter amongst the young and light-hearted ; though the more serious and reflective were calculating what the consequences might prove to be should the shattered buildings be exposed to another shock as severe as the last.

Our party were soon surrounded by friends, and tents were pitched in an open space for their accommodation.

“It’s glorious to see you all safe and well, ladies, after the bobbery. ’Twas no joke that explosion. I thought we were all blown up together, and wondered to see myself standing on my own legs !”

Thus rattled Captain O’Gorman.

“By Jove, O’Gorman ;” said a brother officer, “I could not but laugh to see you leap out o’ the window. I never saw you so active before ;

I thought all your agility lay in your tongue barring a ball-night."

"Faith," replied the Captain, "I was standing at the window, smoking a cigar, and thinking about ——"

"Nothing," interrupted his friend, "as usual."

"May be so, Mac," replied the Captain; "but I found myself all at once standing on the stoup outside the window; and I was so mad with myself, that I jumped in again, and staid it out fairly there."

"So you did; but I think the first impulse was the wisest of the two."

"Faith I'm thinking so myself, and I'll be trusting myself wholly to first impulses for the rest of my life. Don't you think it's the best plan, my fair coz?"

"I'm no judge of such matters," replied Norah carelessly; "but here comes Major Singleton. Refer the question to him."

"Singleton," said the Captain, as that officer

approached the party with an air of hesitation and embarrassment singular in a man usually so calm and self-possessed, — “there’s Miss Darcie wishes you to decide whether it is not always safest and best, as a rule of conduct, to act upon first impulses.”

The Major looked as if he wished himself a hundred miles off, and certainly for once in his life, had he acted upon first impulses, he would have taken to his heels; but, like a sensible man as he was, he looked up at the bright intelligent face of the fair girl, well knowing that it was an unerring index to her feelings. All there was calm, placid, and cheering; she certainly looked upon him neither more nor less kindly than usual. He brightened up; she had not then seen his folly. Her utter indifference towards him, in any other capacity than as her father’s friend, was unmistakeable. This conviction fell like a wet blanket upon his half-awakened hopes; but he was almost consoled by the reflection, that all knowledge or suspi-

cion of his recent design was confined to his own breast.

All this had passed so rapidly through Singleton's mind, that O'Gorman was still looking up to him for an answer, and that not impatiently. Relieved from a crowd of painful and humiliating apprehensions, he rallied at once.

"That must depend, O'Gorman," he said, "upon the character and disposition of the person to whom the rule is to apply. For instance, in the late alarm your first impulse led you to leap out of the window—a decision which second thoughts led you to reverse. Miss Darcie's first impulse was to walk quietly out at the door, a decision which she has found no reason to condemn. But I have many apologies to make to you, Miss Darcie, for having been so slow in offering you my assistance. The fact was"—turning towards Norah—"that when that horrid beam had so nearly crushed you, I scarcely dared to raise my eyes.

Never may I again pass through a moment of such horror as that when you were so endangered. And when I did look up, you were gone."

There was something in his voice which bore powerful witness to the agony he had endured.

"Did you hear," said O'Gorman, "of Cardley and his officials? The old gentleman was sitting in great state in his office when the blow-up took place. All at once up he jumped, and rushed for the door, without his hat. Like master like man. All started for a bolt; but poor Cardley in his alarm forgot there was a threshold to the doorway; it caught his foot, and out he shot, head foremost, losing his wig in the shock. The under-strappers followed his example, as in duty bound; and there they all lay, one a-top of the other, in the street, and Old Dignity undermost, without hat or wig. Tom Strangways of ours was coming past at the time, and picked up old Cardley, more frightened than hurt; and a most ludi-

crous figure he was, as Tom describes him. A Malay boy ran off with the wig, and Tom had a long chase on the strand before he could catch the blackguard ; and there were all the slaves round about him, grinning and showing their white teeth at Massa Cardley's bald head."

"Ay," added another, "and they do say that your friend Strangways gave the urchin a schelling to run off with the wig, and then pretended to chase him ; and that Tom laughed so openly, that Cardley is inclined to believe this version of the tale."

The Governor and his Staff now joined the party. His Excellency, one of the most amiable men living, was in excellent spirits, for he had received reports from all quarters that no lives had been lost, and that the damage done was, after all, trifling to what had been in the first instance apprehended.

Various amusing anecdotes were related.

"I was riding," said his Excellency, "about



three miles hence on the Constantia Road, and of course immediately returned homeward, fearful of serious mischief in the town, when we overtook a certain gentleman (alluding to a grave and pompous civilian) pale as a ghost, with his teeth literally chattering. You felt the earthquake? I said."

"Oh, yes—'s," replied my friend, "m—y—y hor—hor—horse was ve—e—ery much fright—fright—frightened."

In short, order was soon re-established, most people returned to their houses, but confined themselves to the ground-floor, with open doors and windows ready to bolt; a few particularly timid and cautious people erected small tents just outside their doors, as places of refuge, which were of course much more exposed to danger, than the interior of the houses.

Captain Timmins announced that all was ready for embarkation: the movements of ships, wind, and weather permitting, are peremptory.

It was an additional pang, to leave their friends, in so unpleasant a predicament, but there was little real danger; and Major Singleton accompanied them on board, taking his last farewell of the blooming Norah, with a degree of calmness, and self-possession, that he would have deemed impossible before the earthquake.

It is always desirable that lady passengers, especially when without husbands or fathers, should embark with a certain degree of *éclat*. Major Singleton and Captain O'Gorman, the Flag-Lieutenant, and his official boats, gave evidence of the importance of our fair friends; and Mrs. Darcie, mild, quiet, and unpretending, was extremely pleasing, and prepossessing. She knew and took her proper place, at all times, with an instinctive tact, and well-bred ease, which whilst it put others on an easy and respectful footing, foiled without effort all rude familiarity, secure as it were in a native atmosphere of dignified propriety.

Norah adored her mother, and was prompt to forestall her every wish with affectionate zeal. Emma, as the youngest, was perhaps a little spoiled by all the rest of the family, which had made her rather too ready to express her opinion of what she heard or saw, and as her perceptive powers were singularly acute, this was occasionally ill-timed, and inconvenient; but a word, or a look from mamma, stopped her instantly.

There was nothing so painful to Mrs. Darcie's children, as the thought of having offended or displeased her; and as they grew up, this feeling, though somewhat modified in its form and effects, was a living principle, actuating more or less every important act of their lives. How inestimable is such a mother, and how guilty as well as foolish is the woman, who wantonly forfeits the affectionate respect of her children.

Andrews, a faithful and attached old servant, and Mrs. Darcie's maid, Susan, were the

only servants, with them ; for as they were to remain with the Vaughans, till they could proceed to India, they would not encumber their friends' house with unnecessary attendants ; but Andrews and Susan were intelligent and devoted domestics. A change of servants was a very rare thing in that family. The Darcies felt that there were reciprocal duties between masters and servants, and they were always well and affectionately served.

Fatigued in body and mind by the strangely exciting events of the day, looking forward with painful anxiety to the dangers and discomforts of a long sea-voyage with so precious a charge, and that, too, for the first time, without her husband, Mrs. Darcie was in low spirits. Her separation from her dearest friend, whose society she had so thoroughly enjoyed, and whom she had left in delicate health, and deep, though suppressed, affliction, altogether weighed heavily upon her mind, and she retired very early to rest, if rest it

could be called, for the agitation of her spirits had kept her many hours awake, and she had scarcely at length obtained the blessing of sleep, when the various discordant noises which announce preparations for starting at daybreak, effectually roused her to a painful recollection of her situation.

The young people of course slept soundly, and if they did regret the friends and scenes they had quitted, the novelty of all around them interested and amused them.

Mrs. Darcie never permitted anything short of real illness to keep her from the breakfast table. The morning was fine, the noise and bustle of getting under weigh and making sail had ceased, and when they went upon deck for a few minutes before breakfast, they found themselves abreast of the little desolate spot at the entrance of Table Bay, called Robin Island. The Liffey was also in company, and both were interesting objects to Norah and her sister. There was the well-known Table

Mountain too, which occupies so large a portion of the Cape Town horizon; the Sugar Loaf, and other familiar objects still prominently in sight, and they were almost considered as old friends now.

The party at breakfast consisted of Captain Timmins, whose attention to his passengers was unceasing, but never intrusive or ill-judged, flowing evidently from a kindly disposition. His chief mate, Mr. Turnbull, a plain, honest, well-behaved sailor; the Surgeon, Mr. Waters, and two gentlemen who had been residing at the Cape for the benefit of their health. Of these last, Mr. Rushton was a sort of *ci-devant jeune homme*; and like most Anglo-Indians, an ardent admirer of extreme youth. Mr. Chartres, his companion, was many years younger, though still of mature age; but though, like his friend, of gentlemanly manners, and scrupulously courteous and respectful to the ladies, a long course of ill-health and the solitude of an up-country

station in India had combined to fix all his serious thoughts upon himself and his ailments. The Darcies had seen little of them at the Cape, though they had occasionally met them in society; for during the early part of the stay of these invalids at the Cape they had been too unwell to go much out, and latterly they had been living at Stellenbosch.

The first day of a long voyage gives full occupation to passengers, and if fine, every hour of it is valuable, as preparations must be made, especially off the Cape, for rude and boisterous weather.

The second night justified all their precautionary measures; a north-west gale suddenly sprang up, not fortunately of the most violent kind, but the sea ran high. The Thames, though a stout vessel of six hundred tons, was old, and laboured much. The creaking of bulkheads, the groaning of beams and timbers, the inexplicable noises over head upon deck, the

roaring of the gale, and the rushing of the water when she shipped a sea, invading the cabins, formed altogether a diabolical concert rather alarming to the uninitiated.

Captain Timmins had the consideration to send cheering messages to Mrs. Darcie during the night ; but for forty-eight hours she and her family were close prisoners. On the third morning the gale broke ; and they were fortunate in this, for off the Cape heavy gales are often followed by a dead calm. The high breaking sea caused by a strong current, running in opposition to the previous gale, then frequently becomes dangerous, as without a breeze there is no possibility of steadying the ship, or of keeping her in an advantageous position with reference to the seas. Thus the seaman's art becomes vain, and ships are frequently dismasted, sometimes lost, by the sudden change from a heavy gale to a dead calm.

• But the wind, in this instance, abated gra-



dually, and was soon succeeded by a fresh south wind. The water became comparatively smooth; the effects of the gale were soon remedied; they had a fair wind; and our friends emerged from their close and tedious prison, delighted to see the sun once more, and to enjoy the cool refreshing breeze. But the Liffey had parted company during the gale, which was a subject of general regret, as a consort in such voyages is a source of continual interest and amusement, breaking the dull monotony of a boundless horizon. Even Emma could find no better diversion than watching the varied movements of the birds, which at certain seasons are found in prodigious numbers in those seas,—from the Mother Cary's chicken, careering under the counter or quarter of the ship, almost within reach during the gale, to the gannet soaring in the air, and dropping upon its prey with a suddenness and a plumb almost startling; whilst gulls of various species watch the wake of the ship, clamouring

and contending with each other for every fragment that floated from her; the sea-swallow, in rapid sweep, crossing her path in all directions; and occasionally a dull heavy albatross, sailing swiftly on without apparent effort, supported by enormous wings frequently twelve or fourteen feet in extent; sometimes gliding close above your head, wholly unconscious of danger; at others, seated on the water, in a state of perfect repose, which marks the ocean as its home.

Norah watched the various movements of these wild rangers of the sea with great interest, pointing out to little Emma the striking variety of size, form, and movement of their winged attendants.

“May I offer you, Miss Darcie, a large and valuable History of Birds; the plates are coloured from nature, and would please your sister. The habits and character of the birds you are now admiring are very interesting, and would beguile a weary hour. It is always well

to study the history of an animal whilst the original is under your eyes, in the full exercise of its natural habits."

Emma, looking up rather saucily at Mr. Rushton, who had made this obliging offer of his books, and with whom she had established a very friendly intercourse, whispered something to her sister, who checked and reproved her ; though it was evident she had some difficulty in preserving her gravity.

Norah having graciously accepted the offer of the book, Mr. Rushton begged hard to know what might have been the purport of a whisper, in which he was clearly concerned, and which had proved so amusing.

"Really," replied Norah, "it was only a little piece of impertinence. Emma excels in such things in a small way ; but, as I would not give importance to a trifle by making a mystery of it, she asked very significantly if birds were animals ; but I perceive that you

encourage her to prattle, and now you see the consequence."

"A strange sail a-head!" was announced from aloft.

"It must be the Liffey," observed Mr. Chartres, languidly; "I am glad of it—I don't like being alone!"

The chief mate, who had gone aloft with his glass, for it was of course doubtful whether she would prove friend or foe, now reported a ship of war, standing towards them under a press of sail. This was rather alarming; as the Thames possessed no power of resistance against a vessel of the kind, and was, indeed, very weakly manned; and certainly no flier.

"There can be little doubt," said the Captain to his passengers, 'soothingly, "that she will prove a friend. Enemies' ships are rare hereabout, whilst our own cruizers are frequently returning from the Isle of France squadron to the Cape."

She was now distinctly seen from the deck, and her sails were declared to be English ; but as her hull rose rapidly into view, the chief mate pronounced her to be French built, a very large corvette. Considerable uneasiness prevailed, which her hoisting English colours soon after did not much allay ; as French ships frequently approached strangers under English colours. Mrs. Darcie retired with her children to await the event, in great alarm.

At length the strange vessel was within hail: it was Her Majesty's ship *La Bonne Citoyenne*. This was indeed a relief.

The usual questions having been asked and replied to, Norah asked the Captain to inquire about the *Petrel*, as *La Bonne Citoyenne* had belonged to the same squadron.

"The *Petrel*," replied the Captain of the corvette, "has been sent by the Commodore to the Mozambique."

"Oh, mamma, we may see *Darby* yet,"

whispered the delighted girl to Mrs. Darcie, and little Emma rubbed her hands together and skipped for joy.

"She was sent," resumed the officer hailing, "in search of pirates, as reports had reached the Commodore that piracies had been committed in the Mozambique Channel. He had no confidence in the information, but thought it right to send a ship, as such things have sometimes occurred there. I should not think there was much danger, but you must be upon your guard."

The Bonne Citoyenne passed on. Mrs. Darcie was terribly alarmed, and all looked very grave at such an unexpected warning. From that moment nothing was thought of or talked of but pirates, and all sorts of horrid tales were raked up, as if every one was intent upon keeping the alarm at fever-height.

Captain Timmins was cordially assisted by our Anglo-Indians, as well as by his own

officers, in preparing such means of defence as he possessed, but they were woefully slender, and did not tend to diminish the general panic.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

LIGHT and variable winds kept the Thames from making much progress, but the weather was beautiful; and the gentlemen, after having considered and debated upon the information received from La Bonne Citoyenne, morning, noon, and night, for forty-eight hours, took heart.

It was decided that the presence of pirates in the Mozambique Channel was a mere rumour, not credited even by the officer who had so prudently acted upon it; whilst, that the Petrel had been sent there for the protec-



tion of our trade was a certain fact. This conclusion was so plausible that most of them dismissed their apprehensions altogether, though nothing was neglected that could contribute to their safety, and a vigilant look-out was kept day and night.

"What do you think of this pirate story?" said Mr. Chartres to his friend Rushton, as they were sitting together on the poop, in their light cotton dresses and huge straw hats.

"I don't think about it at all, having heard similar stories a hundred times before," replied his friend; "but they have always turned out to be unfounded. I wish Mrs. Darcie thought as little about it as I do."

"One can scarcely wonder," said Chartres, "that she should be nervous on such a subject; but the report has certainly deprived us of her company almost entirely."

"I suppose you, who are a professed ladies' man, are regretting the seclusion of the fair Norah," observed Rushton, rather sarcastically,

“as you seemed very attentive to her. She is certainly very pretty; and I really think, if she had been a little younger, I could have admired her myself; but I am certain she is more than eighteen, and I can’t stand that. I would do anything to serve them, and will make their voyage as agreeable as I can to them; but she’s too old for my taste.”

Thus spoke a sensible man, who was certainly nearer thrice than twice Norah Darcie’s age; older, indeed, than her father, to a friend of his own caste, many years younger than himself; and neither of them perceived anything unreasonable, still less absurd, in it. So much do opinions depend upon example and circumstances.

Yet Chartres did really admire Norah, much more than he was then aware of. He was a little shocked to hear Rushton’s damaging assertion, that she was more than eighteen; and as he had a high opinion of his friend’s taste and delicacy in such matters, he felt

rather ashamed that she really should appear to him both young and lovely.

Mrs. Darcie shuddered at the recollection of the pirate stories; and although she came to the table as usual, and took her regular walk on deck morning and evening, she was anxious and uneasy, and could with difficulty be induced to join in conversation, to which she had till then contributed so much spirit, information, and delicacy. Our two Indians strove in vain to amuse her, and even Norah, whose joyous disposition had so cheered the monotony of their imprisonment, though she was far from sharing in her mother's apprehensions, and was much more disposed to hope for a meeting with the Petrel than to fear an attack from pirates, was yet so much devoted to her mother that her spirits flagged, as she looked upon that thoughtful anxious face, and saw tears struggling to escape from eyes so fondly fixed upon herself. So even Norah soon seemed to have lost her own natural

character, and to have become almost as grave, as silent, and as pensive as Mrs. Darcie. She scarcely ever left her mother's side; and, indeed, the anxious parent could hardly bear to have her out of her sight.

"Confound that corvette," said Chartres to to his friend, with a degree of pettish animation, strangely at variance with his usual languid manner of speaking. "We have been awfully dull, since they told us that foolish cock-and-bull story about the pirates. Come here, Emma," he added to the child, who was amusing herself with watching the tricks and grimaces of a small green Brazil monkey; "come here, Emma: are your mamma and your sister coming out to walk this evening?"

"I don't know, but I think not," replied Emma, carelessly, thinking much more of the monkey than of any of the party.

"Go and tell mamma, dear, that the evening is very fine. There is a light cool breeze,

which is very refreshing. It will do her good to take a walk."

Emma did not half like having her sport interrupted ; but she was good tempered, and rather looked up to Chartres, who like most valetudinarians had a private store of bonbons, under some ridiculously learned name, which, however, in no degree impaired their flavour, as Emma well knew ; and of these, amongst many other acts of kindness, he was very liberal to her.

The embassy was successful. The beauty of the evening, the refreshing breeze, the evident gratification of the gentlemen at having tempted them forth, with their quiet well-bred unobtrusive attentions, and above all their scrupulous care to avoid all allusion to the unhappy cause of Mrs. Darcie's terrors, had their effect. They spoke of their friends at the Cape ; they enlarged upon the pleasures of Indian society ; the place at which Mrs. Darcie was likely to be established, and the chief

members of the community in which she would find herself, were familiarly known to them. Gradually she became interested in the conversation ; her countenance brightened up, and Norah, delighted to see her mother cheerful and animated, was herself again ; or rather such a return of her natural spirits took place, that she was very soon playing with the monkey quite as joyously as Emma herself.

“ Well,” said Chartres to himself, “ if she is more than eighteen, she is remarkably young of her age.”

And Rushton having become quite eloquent in describing to Mrs. Darcie the emoluments and advantages of the command of a brigade, which, as an old Colonel, her husband would certainly obtain, Chartres, who had found himself eclipsed in that quarter, or perhaps had been drawn by an irresistible attraction in a different direction, was absolutely seen by his astonished friend, laughing at, and commenting upon, Jacko’s freaks, in total forget-

fulness of his half-real, half-imaginary ailments, and to all appearance greatly preferring the too mature charms of the elder sister, who had been accused by her friend, *more Indiano*, of being more than eighteen, to the interesting naïveté of the younger, who, in the opposite extreme, fell at least ten years short of that age.

This re-establishment of social intercourse, and the temporary abeyance of Mrs. Darcie's overwhelming anxieties, had been a considerable relief to all parties. Mr. Chartres began to entertain very serious doubts whether it was really a mortal sin, for a lady to have counted eighteen summers, whilst Mr. Rushton, whose opinion upon that subject nothing could shake, began to doubt the possibility of Norah's being in that unfortunate predicament.

Both gentlemen retired to rest thinking much more of the young lady than she did of them, though no confidential conversation upon the subject took place between them; and

had some fairy betrayed to her, the secret thoughts of our two Anglo-Indian friends, she would have laughed by the hour. It was quite as well that Mrs. Darcie got one good night's rest, the first she had enjoyed, since they had spoken *La Citoyenne*.

The following morning they were abreast of the Bazaruto Islands, when standing off-shore, in a direct line for the Thames, was seen a rakish-looking brigantine, tant-rigged, evidently a foreign vessel.

"I don't like the look of her, Turnbull," said Captain Timmins, after a long and anxious examination of the stranger through his telescope. "Her sails are very white and well set, but the vessel herself with a tier of guns, looks dirty and disorderly."

"She's neither merchantman, nor man-of-war," replied the chief-mate. "Her sails are as you say beautifully set ; she's a clipper of some sort. I don't like her looks neither : I can't say I do."



By this time the alarming intelligence that a very suspicious-looking stranger was closing fast with them, had reached every part of the Thames with considerable embellishment. Those who had laughed to scorn the pirate story began to alter their note.

“What do you make of her, Captain?” asked Mr. Rushton, somewhat anxiously.

The Captain assured his passenger that he saw nothing in her appearance to alarm him much ; that her laying a course which would soon bring her close to them was a matter of accident. She had been upon a wind when they first got sight of her, and be what she might, it merely proved that she was bound to the southward, and was beating out of the channel.

“We will prepare for defence,” he added, “and stand on, as she would sail two feet to our one,” he muttered, “and by hauling from her we might encourage an attack. No, we’ll stand on,” he repeated.

Everybody was now on deck. The slender means of defence they possessed were prepared. Our two Anglo-Indians, thoroughly aroused, threw off all appearance of languor, and assured Mrs. Darcie that they would devote themselves, under any circumstances, to the protection of her and her children. The calm, manly tone in which this was said, secured her entire confidence in them, and somewhat reassured her. They mustered, gentle and simple, twenty Europeans and six natives. The former were mostly supplied with fire-arms. A six-pounder on the fore-castle and two eighteen-pounder carronades on the quarter-deck, which constituted the ship's armament, were loaded with grape-shot, under Mr. Turnbull's directions, and thus prepared, they awaited in anxious silence the approach of the stranger.

"She is a heavily-armed vessel," said Turnbull, "and I think I can make out men of colour upon her decks."

This was soon after confirmed, with the addition that she was full of men.

The gentlemen now proposed that the ladies should go down below.

“Oh!” said the agonized mother, “that we could but see the Petrel! God help us!”

The Second Mate went to the mast-head, but reported that there was no other vessel in sight. The brigantine was now getting very near to them, and keeping away a little to pass close under the stern of the Thames, but she showed no colours, though the Thames had long since hoisted her English ensign.

As the stranger passed under their stern, within pistol-shot, the men were ordered to lie flat down to escape the murderous effect of a raking broadside, but to be ready to spring up to repulse boarders. Some minutes of painful suspense followed as the stranger gradually drew into and then crossed the wake of the Thames; not a word was spoken in either vessel, and it is more than probable that the

crew of the brigantine were quite as much alarmed as our friends.

Mr. Turnbull watched every movement on board the stranger ; he had shifted his place from port to port, as the relative positions of the ships had changed, and stretched along the deck, resting his telescope upon the corner of the port ledge, reported that the brigantine's guns were loose, and apparently the men at quarters. Her decks, too, which had appeared at a distance to be densely crowded with men, were certainly not so now, though they were still more filled with them than any merchant-ship could require. The distance between the vessels soon increased rapidly. Mr. Chartres flew down below to inform the ladies that there was no longer anything to be apprehended, and that the general opinion was that the stranger was a Portuguese slave-vessel.

The excitement arising from the prospect of danger, or some other cause, had produced more effect upon the valetudinarian Chartres,

than his year's residence at the Cape. Not so with Mrs. Darcie. This last alarm, and the fact that they had now entered the Mozambique Channel, terrified her. At the approach of night she trembled lest under cover of the darkness these lawless ruffians might suddenly overwhelm them in resistless numbers ; nor did the approach of daylight bring consolation ; as she feared lest the sudden extension of the horizon should betray them to a distant enemy.

Their progress was slow, and to run the gauntlet thus for many hundred miles, in the continued apprehension of horrors to which she dared not, even in her own imagination, give any definite shape or form, was too much for one so delicate and sensitive. Hour after hour she lay, holding a hand of each of her frightened children, who trembled, not at the dangers of their situation, for little had been said to them about it, but to see their excellent mother so ill and so wretched. At

times she would sit up and look upon the bright and blooming countenance of Norah, so inexpressibly dear to her ; then, sinking back from exhaustion, and closing her eyes, as if she feared to look longer, she would lie pale and shivering, whilst her lips moved in mental prayer.

Mr. Waters, the Surgeon, was a man of sense and experience. His attention was unremitting, but as the root of the evil lay beyond his reach, so, of course, did the remedy. All he could do was to soothe and mitigate her sufferings. He conveyed to her the only comfort within his power to offer, by assuring the anxious mother that, although their numbers were small, and their armament incomplete, there was but one feeling amongst them ; and that so large a proportion of their little force consisted not only of men devoted to her protection, but from education and experience well able to turn their means of defence to the best possible purpose.

There was some comfort in this, and Mrs. Darcie was grateful for it. She felt confident that so far as they could they would protect her children, even with their lives ; and again she poured forth her soul in prayer. Norah watched over her whilst she slept for some hours.

It was a blessed change, and the loving girl offered up a silent thanksgiving, as she knelt in tears at the couch side.

In the meantime the danger of their situation was brought more vividly home to the other passengers and to the crew, by the presence of women and children. Their armament was carefully inspected ; all means of defence effectively set forth ; the quarter and stern boats fitted for immediate use, water being poured in to staunch them ; for when long exposed in hot climates, boats become dangerously leaky, though covered. Fresh water and provisions were kept at hand, in small casks, ready to put into the

boats. In suggesting and carrying out these and other preparations against the worst, Mr. Chartres, having, under inspiration of some sort, cast off his lethargic habits, had come forth all at once as a most active, zealous, and energetic leader.

“Surely, Captain Timmins,” he said, when after one of their frequent consultations, both had walked the deck some time in silence ; “surely, it would be wise to keep the African shore close on board. It is not usual to do so, I know. The mid-channel is the usual course ; and for that reason the pirates, if pirates there be, will cruize chiefly in the mid-channel.”

The two mates were called to council upon this suggestion ; the charts were spread out : there were reefs and dangers in that route which induced the Captain and his officers to hesitate ; for, by striving to avoid a danger which might not really exist, they might fall into the certain danger of being



wrecked upon a barbarous coast, so little known to them.

"Still," resumed Mr. Chartres, "coral reefs scarcely appear to be more numerous in shore than elsewhere. We know that the Portuguese have several small trading stations on the mainland, and that an active coasting trade is kept up along shore. We shall have opportunities of picking up information; and might, in case of immediate danger, find protection under some Portuguese fort."

"None of their stations could afford us protection," replied the Captain. "It is doubtful whether Mozambique itself could do that; and we are now to the north of that settlement. Information we might get; but that without protection would be of little use. We should certainly prolong our voyage, as well as endanger the ship; and the monsoon is approaching."

"I doubt, sir," said the chief mate, "whether we should lengthen our voyage; for we should

get a land-wind at night, which does not reach us here."

Mr. Chartres having thus fairly brought the subject under consideration, and having induced the seamen of the council to consider the nautical advantages and disadvantages of his proposal, unmasked his principal battery; for by this time all those whose position on board entitled them to express an opinion upon the subject, so vital to them all, had gradually joined them; and he well knew that he should find a large majority ready to adopt his view of setting at nought all considerations of danger to the ship and to themselves, and to consider how they might best work to secure the safety of Mrs. Darcie and her daughters, as well as the other females; to protect whom they were bound to sacrifice every personal consideration. He had already secured the ardent co-operation of Rushton and the Surgeon, who having now joined them, Chartres thus addressed the

party, feeling confident that the Captain would be with him :

“I have heard with much pleasure, Captain Timmins, that you and Mr. Turnbull are satisfied that by pursuing our course as close as possible to the African shore, we shall neither materially increase the risk of shipwreck, nor lengthen our passage through this dangerous channel. These are points upon which, as a landsman and a passenger, I could not presume to give an opinion. But as you do me the favour to ask me to state my views, I think it must be obvious to every one that if the usual course for merchant-ships through this long strait lies in the mid-channel, it is there that pirates looking out for them will certainly cruise. By passing close along shore we shall have a much better chance of escaping; whilst, in case of being attacked, we may hope to find protection in some Portuguese settlement, of which there are said to be several on this coast. And as there is known to be a

coasting trade kept up, both between these stations and with Mozambique, we may pick up intelligence, or probably find a Portuguese ship of war, sent for the protection of the trade. Whilst as we know that the pirates, if there are any, must draw all their supplies from Madagascar, on the other side of the strait, we shall on that account also be less likely to fall in with them."

The Captain and chief mate readily concurred in all this, and Mr. Rushton made the following proposal:—

"As Captain Timmins takes the same view of this subject as we do, I hope he will at once haul the ship in for the coast, and keep as near to it as he can with safety. We are much obliged by this opportunity, so kindly afforded us, of stating our opinions; and he may rely upon it that he will find us all determined to defend the ship, and, above all, to protect the precious charge committed to us from falling into the hands of merciless ruffians. Let us

enroll ourselves in one compact body, and drill to the use of arms; for we are more likely to be deficient in discipline than in courage."

Everything was speedily put upon the best footing for defence; and Mrs. Darcie, informed of all that had passed, determined to exert herself to second the generous efforts making for her protection. The danger and the remedy had now assumed a definite form; and she thanked God for this ray of hope, cast off her terrors, and came forth to thank and to animate her brave defenders.

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## CHAPTER IX

No vessels could be seen from the Petrel's mast-head when the sun rose. Captain Dauntton and Herbert had once more weighed most scrupulously every circumstance that could claim to influence their movements, but it was still extremely doubtful whether the Thames and her consort might be more or less advanced on the course for Joanna than was the Petrel, though the latter was by far the most probable.

"I think, sir," said Herbert, "that from Manoel's statement, it is almost certain that

the pirates' rendezvous lies in the mid-channel, between Bembatooka, on the Madagascar side, and Querimba on the African shore ; and that your plan of ranging under a press of sail, during the day, from one shore to the other, and lying-to at night in the mid-channel, whilst it gives us the best chance of getting sight of the pirates, will also render it almost impossible that the Thames and Liffey, who will of course be carrying all sail, should pass unobserved during the night ; and if they should be, as we have so much reason to believe, still to the southward, they must be hourly closing up with us, whilst the pirates must certainly be to the northward. This then is clearly our best plan for the next twenty-four hours. It is to be hoped that something may turn up during that period to relieve us from this dreadful uncertainty."

" I am glad you agree so entirely with me in this matter, Herbert, for any decision under such circumstances carries with it a painful

responsibility. Send for Manoel : we must question him further about the smaller pirate. I incline to hope that she would hardly venture to attack the two English ships together, in the absence of her comrade. They both carry guns."

"I hope not, sir," said Herbert, hesitatingly, though it was clear that he put little confidence in the suggestion. "But here is the man."

"Well, Manoel," said the Captain, "what size was the schooner that captured your brig? how was she manned and armed?"

"More as hundred tons, Signor Capitan; hab one long, hebby gun, middy-ship, Signor Capitan, dat go so," and he swivelled himself round upon his heel, very significantly. "She had small gun to de one end, and de toder, Capitan; for man, much more as hundred, all big strong man, wid long knife. I not know how many man."

"What were the officers?"



“I tink all black man—one, two, I not sure—all dirty like. Very many say him officer. I hear speak all tongue most. One big fellow make all ’fraid; I tink him not black man. All dress same, all same dirty. Dat big man dey call Cacafofo; he carry pistol. Him point pistol to me, him laugh horrid; I not like dat laugh. Him laugh when dey cut Portuguese man’s head off; terrible laugh dat, Signor Capitan.”

“Had all the crew fire-arms?”

“Some hab gun, some hab pistol, some not hab; all long knife hab, Signor Capitan.”

“How long were you prisoner with these people?”

“Tree very long day, Signor. Dey kill half Portuguese man, first day; dey say because we fire gun at dem. Dey chop him head off on the gunnell; Cacafofo he stand by; he laugh, dey all laugh! Den next day not do noting—next day most man drunk from plunder brig; dey swear, make row, bery drunkee.

One black man he stab Portuguese man ; oder Portuguese man catch knife, stab him dead ; all mans take knife, ebery body kill toder man. Den Cacafo go he come ; he shoot two Portuguese man—knock me dead, mid but end—when I live again, all Portuguese dead ; all oberboard ; dey go kill me—Cacafo swear no, he send me to Governor for cruzado, dollar ; else he plunder Mozambique when Commodore cum.”

“ How many of the pirates were killed in this fray ? ”

“ Seberal ; how many, not know—nobody care—dey all throw to shark ; shark follow dat schooner close ! ”

“ A very pretty set of rascals ; but if you were taken by them to the southward of Mozambique, why do you believe that the pirates will cruize to the north of it ? ” asked the Captain.

“ Much dem mans talk Portuguese. I hear him say, Commodore he go to Bembatooka.

Dey find him between Querimba and Madagascar, Cacafo go say dat many times. I see Secalava man board dere too."

"How do you know they were Secalavas?"

"Dem men put me on shore in de boat on de coast ; dey Secalavas ; I see him fore. I to Madagascar very many time."

"This statement of Manoel's, sir," said Herbert, "would lead us to conclude that the rendezvous of the pirates must be more than fifty miles north of our present position, and, as far as it goes, tends to confirm us in your plan of proceeding. But, alas! the more closely we examine the data upon which we are compelled to decide, the more painfully obvious it is that all rests upon mere conjecture."

It was, indeed, a most cruel position, for it was impossible to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion as to the real position of the objects of their anxiety with reference to the horrid crew so terribly pictured by Manoel, or her

still more dangerous comrade, and yet that was the point upon which all depended, and on which to err might be fatal. Herbert was almost distracted. He could take neither food nor rest, and if when worn out with fatigue and anxiety, he did unwillingly close his weary eyes, the image of Norah and her mother, surrounded by demons and calling upon him for protection, whilst some incomprehensible spell withheld him, came so distinctly before him that he started up in a paroxysm of despair.

Poor Darby, pale and woe-begone, spoke not a word. Nothing could rouse him ; that joyous spirit was crushed. All that terrible day he sat in the top-gallant cross-trees, vainly sweeping the horizon with his telescope, in mute hopelessness. In vain did Tandy strive to alleviate his grief by sharing it. He was constantly seated by him in the cross-trees when off duty. No one had the heart to exact duty from poor Darby ; every-

body loved him, everybody felt for him ; for the rough seaman is capable of feeling deeply for those who are uniformly kind to him. Chouchow, rough, wild, and eccentric, watched over Darby in his hour of affliction, with the tenderest care. Indeed he never quitted him, and none of his many neglected masters complained of his desertion.

The Petrel, stretching across from shore to shore under a press of canvas, beat the wide channel for her prey, as a pointer beats a stubble field ; but night returned once more, and all was still uncertainty. His zealous friends at length prevailed upon Darby to quit his elevated station. He knew that it was useless to remain there after dark ; his generous heart felt all their kindness, but speak he could not.

“ Master, turn in now,” whispered Chou, resuming his allegiance to Darby, “ else master not able to board the pirates.”

This was the true chord to harp upon, and

well did that strange lad know the way to Darby's heart. Danvers attended the afflicted boy with equal skill and kindness, and with Chouchow's assistance, administered a powerful opiate, without the knowledge of his patient.

Herbert and Darcie had not met. Both seemed to avoid it. Neither of them spoke of or even inquired for the other, but there can be no doubt that they fully appreciated each other's feelings, and that the deepest sympathy existed between them.

Daylight came at last. No guns had been heard, no lights had been seen, nor did the immense extent of horizon they now commanded show a sail of any kind.

They stood over to the Madagascar shore, with a strong breeze, till they were off the Table Cape, which marks the approach to Bembatooka: still nothing was to be seen. It was dreadful!

"We must get a good sight of the African shore before dark, Herbert," said the Captain.

Herbert obeyed mechanically, and they were soon steering for Querimba with a ten-knot breeze.

It so happened that whilst on the previous evening the Petrel had been lying-to, in the mid-channel, in a well grounded hope that the Thames and Liffey might close with her during the night; on the supposition that they were still to the southward of her, and would steer for Joanna in the mid-channel, that unfortunate Thames which had really been in the very position they had assigned to her, had in compliance with the unanimous opinion of her sensible and judicious officers, and passengers, in council assembled, sought for safety by leaving the mid-channel, and standing in for the African shore, at the very time when by standing on in her direct course, she would have been close up with the Petrel in a few hours—certainly in sight of her at daylight. This therefore was a resolution much to be deplored, though the wisdom, and propriety

of it, as far as appearances went, were unquestionable. "Man proposes, but God disposes."

On board the Thames, their three guns were now carefully examined, tackles, breechings, and all their gear overhauled; additional wads made, and the deck so cleared, that they could readily transport the guns from one side of the ship to the other. The second mate, an active intelligent young seaman, commenced training one part of the crew to the guns, whilst the chief mate exercised the rest at loading and firing small arms, and repelling boarders, assisted by Andrews, Mrs. Darcie's confidential servant, a gallant old soldier; whilst our Anglo-Indians and the Doctor, with their servants, all well armed, devoted themselves to the special care, and protection of the ladies, under the direction of Chartres.

The stern and quarter boats with water, provisions, and ammunition in each, were prepared, that if they should be surprised in the



night, by pirates, they might attempt to carry off the ladies, in the dark, and endeavour to get out of sight before daybreak.

"It is but a slender chance, Captain Timmins, I am aware," said Chartres, who had suggested this, "but we must not throw away a shadow of a hope, where the safety of our precious charge is at stake."

Mrs. Darcie with her habitual good sense, drew some consolation from the spirit with which she saw her gallant defenders organizing their means of defence. She knew the value of order and discipline, and began to feel some confidence in their zealous preparations for the worst. She herself had not been idle, and presented the Doctor with a supply of lint and bandages.

"I am a soldier's wife, Mr. Waters," she said, "and would fain be of some use."

Their plans and preparations having been explained to her—which included a secure retreat below, for her and her children, in

case of being fired upon, she was deeply affected.

“Many thanks, heartfelt thanks,” she said, “for all your generous attention to the safety of our helpless little party. May I be permitted to ask as an especial favour, ‘that having done what man can do,’ to evade or to contend with the dangers which unfortunately threaten us, we may all join in public prayer, and with one voice commit ourselves to the care of a merciful God.”

There was that in the tone and manner of this proposal, which powerfully moved every heart; and Divine Service nowhere excites more deep and reverential attention than on shipboard. The awful calamity which hung suspended over the heads of those who now so fervently joined in our beautiful Liturgy, on board the unfortunate Thames; the thrilling anxiety with which they had for some time past watched for the sight of a strange sail by day, or listened to the slightest unwonted sound by

night, were highly favourable to religious fervour ; whilst the pallid countenance of the mother, whose soft sweet voice yet lingered in their ears ; the exquisite beauty of the weeping Norah, and the terrified look of the interesting child beside her, formed a group which roused the generous feelings of all. And of the gallant little band, now kneeling around them, to implore the protection of Heaven, whilst awed and elevated by a scene so full of interest, and excitement, that we dare not attempt to describe it, each man silently vowed to save them, come what might, or to perish in the attempt, catching the noble impulse from Chartres, no longer the cold and indolent valetudinarian, but one endowed suddenly with great energies both of body and of mind, united with a chivalrous devotion, which surprised even himself. He was now the leading spirit, to whom a devoted band of brave and hardy seamen looked up for example, and all sense of self had vanished. He lived but to sup-

port, encourage, and protect the friends who had become so dear to him; and though no longer young, his devotion to the fair Norah was strongly tinged with romance. Whilst reading the sublime service of our Church, in a deep mellow voice, tears streamed down his cheeks, and never were prayers more impressively uttered, or more fervently responded to, by a Christian congregation. They arose from the performance of this sacred duty, with resignation and composure; for a hope of Heavenly protection had greatly increased their confidence in each other. The tone of their conversation was grave, perhaps sad; but it was far from displaying hopeless despondency.

The Thames was still approaching the African shore, with a light breeze, when about three in the afternoon a strange sail in the offing was announced.

“God grant it may be the Petrel,” said Norah, clasping her hands, and looking up hopefully.

This was a petition in which Mrs. Darcie heartily joined; but, alas! this chimerical hope soon vanished. Both the mates had ascended to the mast-head with telescopes.

"She is a low rakish-looking schooner, sir," reported Mr. Turnbull, "and is steering directly for us."

"Look carefully seaward, Turnbull," said the Captain. Then, after a short interval, he resumed, "Is there nothing else in sight?"

A moment of painful interest followed.

"Nothing, sir, nothing," replied both the officers.

The Thames was now edged away more, to get as close as possible to the land, in hope that some Portuguese settlement, of which they had heard there were two or three on that part of the coast, might afford them protection from the dangerous-looking craft so fast approaching them.

"She is small," reported Turnbull, who had

returned to the deck, "but I don't like the look of her."

The appearance and the proceedings of the stranger soon became seriously alarming. The Captain and officers again held a consultation, in the presence of Chartres and Rushton.

"I have no doubt," said Captain Timmins, "that the stranger is preparing to attack us; but she looks small, and can hardly carry an overwhelming number of men. She has probably no heavy guns, and, by God's blessing, we may beat her off; or help may come. We must go to quarters. And you, gentlemen, will have the goodness to persuade the ladies to retire."

Chartres and Rushton announced this arrangement to Mrs. Darcie; and as they conducted her and her family across the deck, to the ladder which led below, the whole crew stood with their heads uncovered, gazing with respectful interest upon the melancholy procession.

Mrs. Darcie offered her hand to Captain Timmins, and bowing gracefully to his men, "May God's blessing rest upon you," she faintly said, "for your generous protection of me and my children."

So complete was the silence, that, faint and tremulous as was her voice, every syllable was distinctly heard, and deeply felt.

"The schooner has fired a gun, and hoisted a red flag," said Turnbull.—The shot passed close over the ship.

"Hoist our colours," said the Captain.

Our gallant Anglo-Indians conducted their trembling charge to an open space in the centre of the after-hold, where a platform had been laid, and a small area spread over with canvas, prepared with as much attention to convenience as was possible under the circumstances. Its sides were barricadoed with spare beds, bales of cloth, and everything best calculated to resist shot; though it was scarcely possible a shot should reach the place.

“Your own servants, my dear madam,” said Chartres, “will be in attendance upon you. I will inform you from time to time how things are going with us by the Doctor, who will be in constant communication with you, and will convey your wishes to us. I need not tell you, Mrs. Darcie, that our example on deck will be even more important than our personal services.” Not daring to trust his faltering voice one word farther, much less to take a formal leave, he rushed upon deck, just as a second shot from the pirate passed through the Thames main-topsail. A third soon after cut away two of the main shrouds.

Again they held a council.

“That is a very heavy gun of the pirates,” said the Captain. “To attempt to return their fire would be useless folly. We must reserve all our means of defence for a close contest. The wind is now very light, and should it fall calm, as it almost certainly will do, they may conclude that we have no guns,



and may attempt to take us with their boats, which must be small, for she cannot carry large boats. In that case we should have a chance of destroying their boats and boarding-party, after which they, perhaps, would scarcely venture to repeat the attack."

"I quite agree with you, sir," said Turnbull, "but we have scarcely an hour of daylight left. We are very close to the land, with a coral reef under our lee. The ship is still under command, but one unlucky shot may cripple her. I would propose laying the ship broadside on upon the reef. The water is smooth, and we should gain two great advantages from it; the first, that these heavy shot, any one of which striking the old ship below the water-line must certainly sink her, and leave us all at their mercy should we remain afloat, whether we anchor or no, though the same shot would, when the ship is fairly aground, do us no material injury. The second is, that then we could be attacked

only on the off side, on which we could place all our guns and collect all our force, and might fairly hope to beat them off."

A shot which just then brought down the foretopmast, came powerfully in support of the chief mate's suggestion ; and they had scarcely succeeded in laying the Thames broad-side on, upon the reef, when it fell calm, and the next shot struck the ship below the water-line. In fact, had they not been very prompt in carrying out his proposal, they would have been lost, without the power of resistance, for they must have sunk in deep water.

The next shot brought down the main topmast and all its gear, with a terrible crash, but this was now of no importance.

Chartres sprang down, for he felt how much that fearful crash must have alarmed the tremblers below. "Fear nothing," he said, "all goes well. We have so placed the ship that whatever noise these shot may make, they can do us little real harm, and cannot in the

slightest degree weaken our means of repelling the enemy, who do not seem to be in a hurry to close with us. We are well prepared for them."

Earnestly did they pray for their brave and considerate friends, whose whole thoughts seemed devoted to them.

The three guns were now ready on the starboard gangway, the only assailable point. It had become dark; every obstacle to boarders that could be devised had been accumulated on their only exposed side, and as the enemy could no longer discern their movements, all the small spars were launched overboard, and formed into a loose, unstable, treacherous raft, abreast of the starboard gangway, so constructed as to prevent the assailants' boats from absolutely reaching the ship's side; whilst this intervening obstacle itself afforded no safe footing, but whoever should rashly trust himself upon it, would inevitably fall between the loose, slippery, and rolling spars.

“There,” said Turnbull, looking with some pride upon this ingenious and skilfully constructed trap, “if that doesn’t bother the infernal niggers, I’m no sailor. Besides, sir,” he added, “we have only to level our guns for the edge of the raft, and sheet the rascals home, with grape and langridge, in the confusion sure to be created by this unexpected obstacle, which, in the dark, it will take them some time to understand; and my life for it, but we’ll give the villains a dose that will stagger them.”

“I give you great credit,” said the Captain, “and it removes a doubt I had as to the effect of our fire, which had cost me some uneasiness, for we could not depress our guns sufficiently to fire into their boats when once they were absolutely alongside the ship; and it would have been almost impossible to secure the right moment for firing, as the boats were moving in the dark, and end on, too. Now, the noise and confusion amongst the niggers, when

they strike the raft instead of the ship, will mark the precise time for firing, whilst the raft will keep them exactly at the right range."

Captain Timmins was so elated with the advantage this secured, that he wrung Chartres' hand vehemently.

"You are a brave fellow, Mr. Chartres," he said, "and we'll beat these rascally blood-suckers to their hearts' content."

Another shot struck the hull of the ship.

"I think," said Chartres, "the ladies are pretty safe from shot; but would not a lantern or two put in the bow port, draw the enemy's fire in that direction, which would be an additional safeguard to them."

"Right, sir, right!" said the Captain, "and to us also. They'll think we're repairing damages forward, and all men like to have a mark they can see clearly, when they point a gun in the dark."

It was done, and the next shot struck her on the bow.

“Hurrah!” said Chartres, “run down, Doctor, and tell the ladies we have brought the enemy’s fire upon the other end of the ship, away from them.”

But the firing now ceased. It was perfectly calm : all felt that the hour of trial was at hand ; and if they felt apprehension of the result, it was not on their own account.

“Every man to his station,” said the Captain.

Turnbull took charge of one gun, Mr. Yarker of another, the third was entrusted to Andrews, Mrs. Darcie’s servant. Chartres and Rushton led the small-arm men.

After some minutes of breathless silence, practised eyes, dark though it was, could discern two boats approaching, but their silence and the steady uniformity of their advance, bespoke more of discipline than had been expected from pirates. When about two cables’ length from the ship, the assailants put forth all their strength, whilst a horrid

mixture of shrieks, yells, and savage war-whoops broke forth from them.

What the feelings of Mrs. Darcie and her daughters were, when first they heard these horrid sounds, evidently near and in rapid advance, it is impossible even to imagine. But Chartres, ever alive to the protracted sufferings of his cherished charge, spoke once more:—

“Let us give the villains one British cheer, Captain Timmins,” he said, “and then every man to his work in silence. The British cheer is seldom heard with indifference: the bravest enemy will feel its influence, much more these wretches.”

Every voice told in that one hearty cheer, and the assailants did feel it. They felt that those who had so long and so calmly borne a fire they could not return, were now impatiently biding their time, burning to meet them hand to hand in deadly conflict. But as they were not fired upon in their advance

they became confirmed in their belief that the ship had no guns.

There was no pause in their advance, no check to its rapidity; the impulse had been given, and as a body they rushed on to the attack. But there were amongst that horrid collection of the scum of so many races, many to whom the sight of the British flag had been familiar, the British cheer not altogether unknown, and by whom those accustomed to fight under that flag, and to send forth that cheer, were pretty well appreciated. Many of these quailed before it, and felt strange misgivings.

Chartres, when he proposed the cheer, had a secondary object in view, if it was not indeed its principal one. He could not reflect without shuddering upon the painful effect which must have been produced upon the minds of those precious ones, always present to his thoughts, when they had first heard those frightful savage yells, from a near and rapidly approaching enemy. He knew that



the British hurrah, so boldly hurled in defiance of the ruffian gang, would tell those dear tremblers how sternly, how hopefully their devoted defenders awaited the approach of the miscreant gang. Well did he judge; and earnestly, devoutly did they pray for their bold and generous protectors.

All was again quiet for one moment on board the beleaguered Thames; but the horrid shrieks and yells of the savage enemy drew nearer.

When their overloaded boats struck the raft, and the assailants became aware that some unaccountable obstruction intervened between them and their hoped-for prey, they could not at first comprehend what the obstacle might be. Some few leaped upon the unstable raft, and instantly fell between the loose spars into the sea. A scene of indescribable confusion ensued. This was the moment so coolly and anxiously awaited by Turnbull. He gave the signal, and three

heavy charges of grape and langridge plunged with due effect into the midst of the confused and crowded mass of the assailants, who were screaming and wrangling within twenty feet of the muzzles of the guns. The small-arm men then sprang up, and poured in a deadly fire, which completed the defeat and dismay of the enemy. One only of the pirates reached the deck of the Thames, and he was cut down by our gallant Captain.

The boats being small, and deeply laden, were so low in the water that it had been impossible to depress the guns sufficiently to sink them, or all within them must have perished; but as they pushed off, and retreated without a moment's delay, it was too dark to inflict much further injury upon them, though a galling fire of musketry was kept up as long as they were visible.

The shattered remains of the defeated pirates made the best of their way back to the schooner, too happy that darkness should have

secured their escape. They fled cursing and blaming each other in frantic rage, amidst the cheers of the gallant victors, who had not lost a man. But even these triumphant cheers were severe trials to the terrified women, whose fate so obviously hung upon the issue of the fierce and bloody conflict; and bitter tears were mingled with fervent prayers in their dark and comfortless recess, as they thought of dear friends so fearfully exposed for their protection.

Once more they heard the cheering voice of Chartres with trembling but joyful attention. He, at least, was safe.

"Our brave fellows," he began, "have repulsed the pirates with severe loss. It is to be hoped they will not dare to board again. Their shot, should they resume their fire, can lead to no serious results; and here you are quite safe from them."

"God be praised, my generous friend," replied Mrs. Darcie. "Take half as much

thought for yourself as you do for us, I beseech you. I tremble to ask," she resumed, "but who have we lost in this gallant fight, Mr. Chartres?"

"No one as yet, my dear madam, thank God," he replied.

"Oh, my dear mother," whispered Norah, "Oh that dear Darby and the Petrel were here!"

And again they prostrated themselves at the throne of grace, and prayed, in momentary dread of those same appalling shrieks and yells at which they had so lately shuddered, and which still seemed to haunt them.

Mrs. Darcie could not conceal from herself that the decisive battle had yet to be fought, and that the pirates, furious from their recent defeat, would immediately return to the attack with greatly-increased numbers and aggravated ferocity.

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## CHAPTER X.

WHILST the little Petrel was standing in from the African shore, with a ten-knot breeze, without seeing a sail of any sort, Herbert's thoughts were dwelling with unremitted anxiety upon the dangers to which the object of his dearest affections was so cruelly exposed, and every passing hour aggravated his misery. Manoel's simple description of the pirate crew of the *Fra Diavolo*, with the brutal ferocity of their habits, gave an appalling reality to his worst apprehensions.

"Doctor," said Captain Dauntton fretfully,

“can you not do something for Mr. Herbert? Twenty-four hours more of this work, poor fellow, will madden or kill him. He has but one idea left. He obeys my orders, indeed, but it is mechanically. I cannot get a rational answer from him, except it is upon this dreadful subject. His whole mind is absorbed in it, and he looks as pale and haggard as if he had just gone through a long death-struggle with the yellow fever.”

“I have done all I can for our poor friend, sir,” replied Danvers, in a tone of deep feeling; “but such is the excited state of his mind, that no medical treatment can avail him. That which ought to compose and soothe his painfully agitated state, seems only to aggravate the fever that consumes him.”

“All this is very shocking, Danvers,” said the Captain. “I am neither a young man nor a lover, but this painful uncertainty about the Darcies fevers even me.”

“The feeling is universal throughout the ship, sir. Young Darcie is in a dreadful state. Everybody feels for him ; even that rough, queer Chouchow, who was supposed to care for nothing. He watches over and tends the poor boy, more like a nurse than the rude thing he is. Tandy too is quite subdued, and devotes his whole time to his poor friend when off duty. No mischievous pranks or practical jokes now ; you would not know Tandy. They got Darcie down from the mast-head after dark with great difficulty, and Chouchow, who receives instructions from me, only succeeded in persuading him at last to take nourishment, by telling him that he would not else have strength to fight the pirates. I availed myself of this to throw him into a deep sleep, which still continues, and will do so I hope for some hours yet.”

This colloquy was abruptly disturbed by a cry from the mast-head. It was Herbert's voice.

“A strange sail under the land.”

This welcome cry was uttered in a voice quivering with excitement, and every ear drank it in greedily.

There remained now barely an hour of daylight, and the Captain had already suggested to the Master that in another half hour it would be time to go on the other tack, to take their station for the night in the mid-channel.

“What do you make of her, Herbert?” said Daunton.

“She is a large ship, close under the land, sir, but still standing in,” was the reply. “She has not much wind.”

“Do you see but one? She ought to have a consort if she is what we seek.”

“I see but one, but she is a large ship, and must be the Thames,—I am certain of it! Stop!—stop!” he shouted frantically, “I see another now!—a small vessel. She’s standing towards the ship. By Heaven, ’tis a



schooner!—a long, low, rascally-looking craft as ever man set eyes on.”

This last was spoken to himself, or perhaps even unconsciously ; but that low deep voice was audible to the anxious listeners below, who lost not a word of it.

“ Send Manoel here,” he shouted, in a wild abrupt tone, indicating his agitation.

Manoel was soon beside him. He, too, looked at the strangers for one instant with Herbert’s telescope.

“ Dat vas Fra Diavolo himself,” exclaimed Manoel with horror, as if the sight of her was appalling to him : and well it might be, after all he had seen and suffered whilst on board of her.

“ Herbert,” said the Captain, “ come down. We have important arrangements to make. I trust that rascally Fra Diavolo is now at length within our reach. I want Manoel down to pilot us in. We have not much daylight left. I see them both from the deck,

too, now, and this breeze will soon carry us up to them."

"Keep Herbert as much as possible occupied with his preparations for attacking the pirate, sir," said Danvers.

But the Herbert who now sprang from the Petrel's main-rigging into the quarter-deck at a bound, bore little resemblance to the Herbert who, but one short hour since, had dragged his weary limbs up that same rigging with painful exertion, when his feeble step and haggard looks had been so strongly commented upon by Dauntton to the Doctor. Herbert was now relieved from the intolerable anguish of maddening uncertainty, for he had satisfied himself that the ship was the Thames; and the danger to which his beloved Norah, and those dear ones with her, were still exposed, had become defined and tangible. Above all, the vile miscreants who had dared so deeply to offend and alarm them, and by whom they were still threatened, were at

length visible. He clenched his hands, and his heart throbbed violently at this cheering conviction. To shake off every trace of his late intense sufferings had scarcely required an effort ; his manly frame and vigorous mind resumed their wonted energies, as by enchantment. Once more he was all life, spirit, and animation ; though still, as Daunton had before observed, his whole mind was absorbed in one idea.

“I am certain, sir,” he said, “that this ship is one of the two Indiamen (he spoke as if casting off the last lingering unwelcome doubt) ; “her size alone would mark her for the Thames. Brine described the Liffey as a much smaller ship, so much so indeed, that the Thames had been preferred for our friends, though the Liffey was a newer and a faster vessel.”

“A shot from the schooner ;” was reported from aloft.

The report of the gun was soon heard.

“That’s a heavy gun, sir,” said Herbert, with some uneasiness; “and yet ’tis well she should fire,” he resumed thoughtfully. “Yes,” he repeated, “’tis well that she should fire, instead of laying her at once on board;” for every possible consequence of every single move in this desperate game, where his whole heart and soul were at stake, was scanned and analysed, in his clear and comprehensive mind, with instinctive rapidity.

“Time is everything now,” he resumed. “Those we care for most will certainly have been placed in security beyond the reach of shot; and the pirate is so intent upon his prey, that he does not see us, which he might do now.”

“The schooner has but little wind, sir,” observed Mr. Marliner, “she is rounding to. Ay! I thought so; there goes another shot.”

“Yes,” said Herbert, “she can only carry such a heavy gun as that amidships, and must round to, to fire it. God be praised, she is

wasting precious time ; and we are closing fast with them. I think, sir," he added, "she'll bear the royals now. The wind gets lighter as we near the shore. Those vessels are almost becalmed."

The royals were set, and the flying jib.

"We shall lose the breeze fast now, sir," said the restless impatient Herbert. "We will be ready to start with the boats, if you please, as soon as they can out-row the ship."

"Be ready," said the Captain, "but have patience till the right moment. A long row is but a poor preparation for a severe contest."

The schooner continued to fire at intervals of some minutes upon the ship, which did not return the fire, though she was suffering severely aloft from it. The hull of the Thames was now wholly visible.

"I am certain," said Herbert, for at least the third time, and after looking earnestly at

the ship, "I'll swear it is the Thames! Brine said she had a bright yellow side with ports, and that the Liffey was painted black with a white ribbon. Don't you remember, Marliner, his saying so!"

"Certainly," replied the Master, "I do; there's no mistake about that. I am satisfied now that it is the Thames, though I had my doubts when you first said so."

"She answers Mr. Brine's description of the Thames," said the Captain, "whatever may have become of her consort; and as we know she has guns, I give them great credit for not returning the pirate's fire. It is a great proof of coolness and judgment hardly to have been expected. Nothing encourages an enemy more than a weak ineffectual fire. Our friends are evidently husbanding their means of defence, and preparing to resist boarders. 'Tis well and bravely done. They are both of them too much occupied now to see us, and it darkens fast. The schooner is becalmed

too, so she cannot run her alongside, if she would. We still keep the breeze, and are closing rapidly with them. It will soon be dark ; the villains cannot escape us now, Herbert. Manoel, I must trust to your pilotage."

"Where there's water for that ship, Manoel," observed Herbert, "there must be water enough for us."

"Dat is true, signor, but I think me," replied Manoel, "dat ship is on de reef fast ! but I take you bery close, signor."

The movements of the ship and schooner were now no longer to be distinctly seen, but though the wind was fast dying away, the Petrel was still going faster than armed boats could row. Herbert watched anxiously the passing foam, as this objection to his starting became every minute less and less obvious.

"The schooner has not fired for some time," observed Herbert fretfully. "She can't have got alongside the Thames herself, for want of

wind, but I suspect her boats will attempt it."

"It is possible," said the Captain, "that a shot from us might deter the pirates from boarding; but on the other hand they might suppose it to be their own comrade, for English men-of-war rarely come here. If so, it would encourage them, and there would be also great danger of alarming those brave fellows in the Thames. It might paralyze their defence; and if they can only hold out for a very short time, we shall effectually crush their villanous assailants."

"We are closing fast, sir," said Herbert; "she is evidently well commanded. I was fearful that those heavy shot might sink her, but I have no doubt Manoel is right. They have seen that danger, and, like noble fellows as they are, they have laid her on the reef, or our poor dear sufferers below must have been driven from their place of security, and rendered helpless in a sinking ship. Really the



firmness and courage of these good fellows is admirable."

The schooner was still visible, becalmed, about half a mile from the ship, but wholly intent upon their prey, they dreamed not that the avenger was so near. Neither did those who trembled and prayed in the dark recesses of the shattered beleaguered Thames.

As the pirate had not recommenced his fire, the inference that his boats were attacking the ship was obvious, and the suspense awful.

"We can pass the Petrel now with the boats, sir," said the impatient Herbert.

The Captain assented, and in an instant the boats were manned, for all had long been expecting it. The gallant Petrels saw that the right moment was at hand, and they had awaited the order impatiently.

Herbert took one rapid glance at his boats, and the brave fellows who were so evidently panting for the moment of action.

"Be careful, my lads," he said aloud, "that

not a word is spoken in the boats, or the slightest noise made, lest we should alarm the enemy. Not a shot must be fired without express orders from me. Anstey, regulate your movements by mine. I will lead you alongside the pirate. Cut the villains down, and spare not! Pike, and bayonets, and cutlass, never miss fire, lads."

He pressed the Captain's offered hand, and sprang into the boat. At this moment young Darcie rushed upon deck, urged by a sort of instinctive perception of what was going on; perhaps roused purposely by Chouchow, for he was still scarcely awake. He heard the orders given by Herbert, and was instantaneously by his side, in the boat, followed by the faithful Chouchow, who never left him now. Herbert pressed the gallant boy's hand affectionately, but no word was interchanged. It was not needed. Their congenial spirits were in full communion.

"A broadside from the ship," said Herbert

almost convulsively; for he felt that the attempt to board her from the pirates' boats must at that very moment be taking place, and he was yet far off from the scene of action. "Musketry, too!" he muttered, and he appeared to draw some consolation from that.

Young Darcie's hopes and fears alternated as he perceived the varying emotions of the generous friend beside him, upon whom he so implicitly relied.

"Hark!" whispered Herbert. "Surely I heard a cheer. Was it not so?"

Darby and others were certain they had heard it too.

"They have beaten the villains off, Darby," whispered Herbert to him whose feelings were so completely in unison with his own. These were the first words that had passed between them since the fatal news had reached them at Mozambique. Darby's spirits rose.

Again all remained quiet for a considerable

time, during which the boats had advanced rapidly towards the scene of action.

“Another shot!” muttered Herbert. “God be praised there is a breeze now; and yet they hesitate to lay their craft alongside. Little do the villains dream how precious each minute now is!”

Again the firing had ceased, and for some minutes the suspense was agonising. The breeze had freshened, and they lost sight of the schooner. The uncertainty arising from the darkness was a painful aggravation of their anxiety at this most important crisis.

“She must have run the Thames on board,” he muttered. “God help them! Oh, give us but ten minutes now, and all will be well.”

Again the ship fired her broadside, and the flash showed the schooner to be alongside of her; but no musketry followed—no cheer was heard.

“’Tis strange,” muttered Herbert, shuddering. “Give way, lads; all depends upon the

next few minutes." The brave fellows bent to their oars, which the spare hands double-banked; and even Herbert felt that his boat was rushing through the water with an arrow's speed.

He leaped sword in hand upon the pirate's deck. It was encumbered with the dying and the dead; but there was no one to resist him.

The last broadside from the Thames had told fearfully; but all those who had survived it had boarded their hapless victim. Gratings and loose sails had been thrown upon the raft by the pirates, and the passage to the ship had been made both safe and easy. Their former miscarriage had taught them this.

The shouting, hallooing, and screaming of that vile medley of lawless and undisciplined ruffians, whose trade was rapine and murder, most of whom were more or less intoxicated, whilst all were anticipating rich plunder in the dearly-bought prize, would have drowned

ten times the noise made by the brave and well-trained band, who were advancing so rapidly upon them. Herbert saw with delight that the surprise would be complete; but he had too dear an interest at stake to act precipitately, or to leave anything to chance. He was well aware that the pirates were desperate men, goaded by their former defeat, and still more so by their last loss. He knew that in the approaching contest no quarter would be given or accepted by the bloodthirsty savages before him. The struggle was for life or for death. He had every reason to believe that he would be greatly outnumbered; and he felt that the fate of those dearer to him than life was now at stake. His whole soul was concentrated on one point, and he had become cautious as well as desperate, assured that he could wield the energies of his united little band as a man wields his sword in his own right hand,—but he must also command himself.

His whole party were fairly on the quarter-deck before their presence was suspected by its drunken, noisy, and disorderly occupants. They calmly and patiently awaited his orders, in silence and in darkness.

A single glance gave him an accurate view of the state of things. The great cabin was lighted up, and sounds of drunken revelry issued from it.

“Anstey,” he whispered, “throw your whole party between the cabin and the wretches so thickly and carelessly scattered here, howling and drinking. Bar strictly all access to the cabin, lest those noisy revellers within it should take alarm. All depends upon that. We will cut these ruffians in pieces; do you kill every man who shall attempt to enter or to leave the cabin, but no firing; pike and bayonet and cutlass only.”

The order was given and obeyed before the

screaming and disorderly barbarians on deck were fully aware of their danger ; but they now took alarm, and were fast collecting for mischief, short as the interval had been, and dark as was the night.

Herbert turned to his brave followers coolly.

“On them, my lads,” he said, “strike home, and spare not ;” and he led the furious onset.

The startled and bewildered savages fought desperately, but without order, and with inferior weapons ; they were the rabble of the pirate crew, and without leaders. Their officers and leading men were carousing in the cabin, so artfully prepared for them by the brave captain of the Thames, with temptations irresistible. Amidst such a scene of riotous uproar a thunder-storm might have passed unheeded. Pike, cutlass, and bayonet did their fell work unsparingly. The contest was severe, the resistance ferocious ; but pikes



and bayonets kept their long knives at bay, and one-half of them being slain in a few minutes, the remnant fled forward by both gangways, left open for the purpose, by the same masterly calculation which had cut them off from their riotous leaders in the cabin ; for Herbert was as firmly bent upon sparing his own men as upon crushing his opponents ; and to break them up into separate groups, unable to support each other, was to secure both these important objects. The quarter-deck was now wholly in his possession.

“ Tandy,” said Herbert, “ charge up the larboard gangway with your pikemen. Sergeant Mills sweep with fixed bayonets the starboard gangway ; both parties will meet on the fore-castle. There the fugitives will be assembled, give them not a moment’s respite. Spare not a villain of them, but, again I say, no firing. Steel must do the work. That completed, return to the quarter-deck, and put yourselves under Mr. Anstey’s orders.”

Both parties rushed forward along the gangways at the word, carrying all before them.

“Anstey,” resumed Herbert, “your important duty has been well performed. Our complete success depended upon your literal execution of my plans. Hard it may seem to witness such a fray without mingling in it ; but it constitutes under such circumstances the perfection of disciplined valour : I can afford now to take things coolly. These noisy revellers are celebrating their victory. It is necessary to make root and branch work with the miscreants, so noisy in their carouse there. My only difficulty is to keep myself cool and my head clear, under the perilous excitement which, even now, almost masters me ; but after such intense misery as I have endured, and with all that makes life valuable at stake, it is not easy to be reasonable.”

He now divided his own immediate com-

mand into two parties, one was placed at each door of the cabin.

“Anstey,” he said, “my plan is to force my way aft, on both sides of the cabin, through this drunken crowd, as suddenly and with as little alarm as possible. The villains will then be enclosed between you and me. My united parties will assault them from abaft before they can have recovered from their surprise; those who escape us will fly through those doors, purposely left open, and you will dispose of them.”

Minute instructions had been given. Every man knew his share of the work. Herbert undertook to assail one side of the cabin himself, entrusting the other to young Darcie, who had fought manfully by his side throughout the late fray.

“Remember Darcie, we must force our way aft, and once united there, we will face round, form across the cabin, and charge home upon them.”

The doors were quietly opened, displaying a Pandemonium of which Satan himself might have gloried to have been the monarch. About thirty hideous-looking wretches, — Negro, Malay, Secalava, the scum of twenty races,—half naked, foul, and mostly drunk, were celebrating their recent victory in riotous excess ; some lolling in chairs or on sofas, some seated on the table, others at it, laughing, singing, swearing, wrangling. Herbert stood aghast for one moment. The thought of Norah at the mercy of such wretches almost overturned his reason ; the painful efforts with which he had hitherto restrained his rage, to make his victory complete, were scarcely equal to this trial.

He continued, however, to pass on quietly, whilst few of the pirates had as yet observed his entrance, for they could not possibly suspect the presence of a powerful enemy. Nor, indeed, did they readily credit the evidence of their disordered senses, when they saw it, for

there had been no alarm,—not a shot had been fired ; and had they not left their whole crew guarding their cabin doors? But Herbert was suddenly arrested by seeing a brutal-looking savage, with his huge and bloody hand inserted in a beautiful work-box, and rudely dragging forth its contents. It was his own last gift to Norah ! A red hot furnace would have been a safer resting-place for the vile hand of the doomed wretch who thus profaned that gift. The frantic lover gnashed his teeth for rage, and cleft the bare-necked monster to the chine. All his prudence, all his stern resolves, had been lost in a fierce and injudicious rush upon the enemy, but fortunately Darby's voice aroused him.

“The villain,” he shouted, “has murdered my mother !”

Herbert's eyes followed the sound. At the head of the table sat a gigantic black, with a lady's bonnet on his head, to the great amusement of himself and all around him.

Darby, regardless of his life, was rushing upon this huge athletic monster, who, astonished but not dismayed, calmly placed a pistol at the breast of the brave boy, and but that it missed fire, Darby had been lost ; but he, in the wild tumult of his feelings, heeded not, noticed not the act, but buried his dagger in the heart's blood of Cacafogo, the pirate chief.

Thus recalled to reason, Herbert without losing another moment, collected his whole party as preconcerted, formed them across the after end of the cabin, and charged the enemy with great vigour, sword in hand.

Now thoroughly aroused to a sense of their danger, and sobered by it, though wondering whence it could so suddenly have arisen, each man sprang to his weapon. Powerful and desperate men, inured to blood and danger, they made a fearful resistance.

Herbert and some others were wounded, but measures so judiciously preconcerted and

carried out with such precision, in so holy a cause, could not but prevail; and soon a hopeless remnant, flying for life, rushed out at the cabin doors, left freely open to them by Herbert. But in place of meeting the comrades they had left on the quarter-deck, they encountered Anstey's pikes and bayonets, and fell to a man.

The shrieks and yells and dying groans uttered by the discomfited pirates, during this severe struggle had now ceased. All was silent. The Thames and the Fra Diavolo remained in the hands of the victors.

Nothing had yet been seen or heard of the crew or passengers of the Thames. The cool gallantry with which they had so long and so effectually defended their ship against so superior a force, and the trap so skilfully laid for their assailants in leaving the cabin lamps lighted and intoxicating liquors distributed in every direction, proved such depth of design and firmness of execution, that Herbert

concluded they were concealed, and barricaded below, to protect their passengers to the last, with perhaps a hope that the pirates would so far intoxicate themselves that they might sally forth in the night and retake the ship.

“Anstey,” said Herbert, “make the signal that we are in possession of both vessels.”

“Chouchow and I have searched the ship below, Mr. Herbert,” said young Darcie. “There is not a living creature there; but in the after-hold is a barricaded platform. This shawl and these gloves we found there; but nothing else. Where can they be?”

“The stern and quarter boats are gone, and the tackles are hanging overboard, sir,” said Tandy.

“Ha, ha!” exclaimed Herbert, “they are safe, they are safe! Darby,” he repeated exultingly, as he snatched the gloves playfully from his young friend, and thrust them into his bosom. “They are safe, Darby, and not far



off. Those who defended them so long, and took all their measures so admirably, will guard and protect them still. And now their ferocious enemies are crushed——”

“But hold,” he resumed, after a moment’s reflection, “did I not hear that some of these villains had escaped to the shore? Tandy, how many of the pirates do you consider to have jumped overboard and escaped? A dozen, do you think, Tandy?”

“’Tis difficult to count niggers in the dark, in the midst of a scuffle, too,” said Tandy thoughtfully, “but perhaps two dozen.”

“How many did you kill on the fore-castle?”

“More than twenty, sir.”

The Sergeant drew up in front of his commanding officer, and with his military salute, “Twenty-three, sir,” he said. “I told them off, and there they still lie on the fore-castle.”

“How many do you consider to have escaped, Sergeant?”

“Why, sir, as Mr. Tandy says, ’tis difficult to count niggers in the dark, when all are on the move; but I should say about the same number. Perhaps five-and-twenty. They went splash, splash, overboard very fast. We could have shot them down easy, but our orders were not to fire; but twenty-five cannot be much short of the mark, sir.”

“Five-and-twenty of these ruffians escaped to the shore in one body,” said Herbert. “This must be looked to.”

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## CHAPTER XI.

BUT we must return to our interesting sufferers, whom we have been compelled to leave too long in such extremity of danger.

“There is a breeze springing up, Mr. Chartres,” said the Captain of the *Thames*, “which will enable the pirate to lay his schooner alongside of us at his pleasure. This change is to the last degree unfortunate. The old ship is hard and fast upon the reef, bilged, and with several shot-holes below the water-line. I trust that I have done my duty by her. I loved the old craft I have so long com-

manded; and little did I think to have left her bones here. But call your friend. We must consult, and act too. Our beating the villains off has happily given us this last chance for saving our passengers; and we must make the most of it. I see lights flying about on board the pirate. They are up to something. Lower down the boats," he added.

The officers and passengers were soon assembled.

"The enemy," began the Captain, "will soon be alongside of us with his whole force. We cannot hope to beat him off again; and, indeed, have little reason to sacrifice our lives in defence of a wreck, which neither we nor they can ever get afloat. All our efforts must now be directed to the safety of our lady passengers; which, as it is dark, we may hope to accomplish, for the pirates will not see our movements."

A shot, which passed through the ship, and killed one of the men, interrupted the Captain.

“I will bring up the ladies at once,” said Chartres. “Come, Doctor, Susan and Andrews are gone down to prepare Mrs. Darcie for this.”

He sprang down the hatchway, and soon returned to the deck with his trembling charge. To see them safely into the boat, and clear of the ship, was for the moment the chief object with every one.

“I am assured, Captain Timmins,” said Mrs. Darcie, with all the firmness she could assume, “that you and all our gallant friends will soon follow us.” She gave her hand to the brave and intelligent old seaman, as she passed on; and Norah followed her mother’s example.

“Fear nothing, my dear young lady,” said Captain Timmins, deeply moved. “We will, by God’s blessing, protect you.”

“I will fear nothing,” said the weeping girl, “whilst we have such brave friends around us. These tears do not spring from fears for myself, Captain Timmins.”

“Tears,” replied the Captain, “do not always spring from fear. There is not a dry eye amongst our whole crew at seeing you leave us thus, and they know little about fear. We will soon surround you again. Our remaining here for a short time will make your safety more secure.”

This little colloquy had passed whilst Char-  
tres had been conducting Mrs. Darcie and Emma into the boat, which, under existing circumstances, was an affair of some difficulty, and he now returned for Norah.

Just as she was seated, and they were thrusting the boat clear of the ship, a shot struck her mainmast; and covered the boat with splinters.

The Captain looked over the ship's side, and said,

“These shot, my dear ladies, insure your safety, for they tell us that the pirates are as yet unable, or afraid, to lay the old ship on-board. We will soon be with you.”

The whole crew, having been collected, were formed into divisions for the different boats, each party taking a proportion of ammunition, provisions, bedding, spare sails, and everything that could be useful. All was cheerful activity, for the men felt confidence in their leaders, and in each other ; they had been tried.

“ I should like, sir,” said Turnbull, “ to have one more shot at the villains, for love of the old ship ; and I think, sir, if you will leave Yarker and me, with the jolly boat, there’s Tom Daly and Sam Banghem, messmates of poor Dick, that was killed ; they want to stay with us. Tom is a capital shot ; he’d fire the six-pounders, and Sam would hold on the jolly-boat ready for us to jump into.”

“ I think, sir,” added Yarker, modestly, “ we might sweep her decks to some purpose, and if we should have to fight them on shore to-morrow, ’twill be just as well to thin their ranks a little more to-night.”

“ Well, well,” replied the Captain, “ so let it be. But where’s the Steward. Here, Saunders, muster all your people,—all the cuddy servants ; fill the dinner-table with bottles of wine, and spirits ; place large bowls full of punch, with as little water as may-be,—ale, porter, liqueurs, everything that can make a man drunk ; and lots of tumblers. Then light up the cabin lamps ; be quick, as we’ve no time to lose. What do you think of that, Turnbull? If they all get drunk, they can’t trouble us to-night. I think that tops your raft.”

“ Right, sir ; and let us leave liquor about the ship in all directions.”

“ The boats are ready, sir,” said Yarker.

And Captain Timmins proceeded with his people, and as much as they could carry of all that could contribute to defence or subsistence, to the cove, which was the general rendezvous, leaving only the jolly boats with the four volunteers ; and fain would the gallant old



Captain have made one of that party, but his presence was indispensable at head-quarters.

“Fear nothing, my dear Madam,” said Chartres, encouragingly, as the boat with the ladies rowed along shore, towards a cove, about a quarter of a mile to the southward of the ship, which they had remarked, as they passed it slowly on the preceding day, with some thought of trying to get the ship into it. “Fear nothing ; so long as the enemy shall continue to fire, there is no immediate danger. Hark! another gun; our friends will have ample time to make good their retreat. It was necessary for your safety to avoid all appearance of an intention to retire to the shore, until darkness should conceal our movements from the enemy ; and they have now given us so much time to carry out our plans that our means of defence and subsistence will be ample.”

“ But if they are so powerful as to be able to drive so brave a crew from the ship, Mr.

Chartres, will they not pursue us and attack us on shore?"

"It will be easy," he replied, "in such a country as this is, to find a position in which we could defend ourselves against thrice their numbers; but they have already suffered severely, and they will not now be allowed to board the old ship with impunity. Measures have been taken which will cost them many lives; and after having had their ranks twice thinned, they certainly will not venture to attack us on shore to-night: and, as you will assuredly be in safety for the night, I hope and entreat that you will avail yourselves of it, to prepare, by rest and refreshment, for the fatigues of to-morrow. I fear we have much toil and inconvenience to look forward to; but I trust your dangers are at an end. I have never concealed the truth from you, even when it has been most painful to communicate it."

"I thank God, Mr. Chartres, our confidence

in you is perfect. We feel all our obligations to you, and will be as little troublesome as possible."

Norah had listened to this conversation attentively, with one of Mrs. Darcie's hands locked in both her own, and Emma's head nestling in her lap.

"The poor child," she said, "is quite worn out, but we are grateful, Mr. Chartres, for present safety. I did not know how tired I was till you assured us we were safe for the night. May Heaven reward you for all you have done for us!"

They landed upon a rough rocky strand, amidst dark gloomy precipices ; but safety was there! and whilst their hearts glowed with gratitude for their wonderful deliverance from such fearful enemies, after so many hours of intense and almost hopeless misery, that rude and rugged shore seemed an earthly paradise.

They had still heard the pirate's heavy gun from time to time, but it had now no

terrors for] them, as Chartres assured them it was a pledge that the friends they had left behind would have ample time to carry out all their plans in safety, and that the whole party would soon rejoin them.

Truthfulness is valuable beyond all price. Chartres had never disguised the truth from them, however alarming it might have been, and thus his present assurances had power to calm and soothe the weary sufferers. They felt that they were really safe, for Chartres never sullied his honour by fencing with truth; and no crime, however atrocious, makes such wide wild havoc with human happiness as falsehood, which sheds its vile insidious venom through all the thousand ramifications of social hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, aggravating every evil, blighting every blessing.

A rude couch was soon formed with sails, under the cover of a huge over-hanging rock, which formed part of the little promontory,

on the north side of the cove, protecting it from being exposed to those on board the Thames. But men had been sent to seek a more sheltered retreat.

Mrs. Darcie looked with delight upon her children, harassed, fatigued, but, by the mercy of Heaven, safe; bruised, but not crushed, by the terrible storm which had so lately raged around them. And with humble confidence in the continuance of that divine protection which had hitherto been so graciously vouchsafed, they ventured, with their faithful guards around them, to seek the repose they so much needed. The firing had ceased, and all was still.

Chartres and Rushton, seated at a little distance from their charge, watched carefully over them, whilst the seamen unloaded the boat, and searched for water, which was an object of incalculable importance, and indeed of considerable anxiety to them.

“The villains have now so long ceased to

fire," observed Chartres, "that, with this breeze, they ought to be alongside the ship; I wish our friends were here. I hope they won't be rash, and risk too much. The thought of abandoning the ship is so galling even to Timmins, cool and sensible as he is. I could see that, in spite of his better judgment, he was longing, as much as any of the others, to have one fight more with the rascals. But hark! I hear the boats."

"Ay," replied his companion, "here they are at last; and there's the broadside too, which I hope has killed all the scoundrels. It was high time for our friends to retreat. They have stayed to the last moment."

"Hear those horrid shrieks and yells," said Chartres. "Our brave fellows have not thrown away their fire. The pirates must have suffered severely, if we may judge by the bellowing they make. Thank God, our dear friends here are out of danger."

"Well, gentlemen," said Captain Timmins,

who now joined them, "we are all here now but Turnbull and his little party, and if we may judge by our ears, they have carried out their purpose well. They were the very men to do it. How are the ladies? I think after this second dose the pirates will hardly venture to molest us here. They must have lost a great many men."

"All goes well here," said Chartres. "We are in a capital position for defence, but I have sent hands out to seek a better-sheltered retreat for our harassed friends, and here they come."

A cavern had been found at some distance on the edge of a small ravine, which was capable of being made very secure and commodious, and was not exposed to the sea.

Chartres with his indefatigable zeal set out at once to examine and prepare the newly-found quarters for the objects of his unceasing care. Spare sails and other things suited to the purpose of which the boats had now

brought a large supply, were carried up and placed at his disposal, and as it was found that there were several of these caverns, he selected the most eligible of them, and began to prepare it at once, whilst their stores and provisions were carried up and secured in the others.

Mr. Turnbull and his party arrived soon after in high spirits, for they had completely succeeded in pouring a shower of grape and langridge into the crowded decks of the *Fra Diavolo* with terrible effect, for as she was much higher out of the water when she took the raft than the boats had been, the depression of the guns had been sufficient to make the whole charge tell upon her.

Yarker was sent to join the party in search of water, the want of which had already become the most pressing evil they had to contend with.

Chartres was soon enabled to announce that a far more sheltered and commodious place of



refuge had been prepared, and half an hour afterwards Mrs. Darcie was surprised and deeply grateful to find herself seated with her girls in a state of comfort and security which, contrasted with the horrors of the last few hours, appeared magical.

A blazing fire in front of the cavern gave a cheerful aspect to the scene, for their present situation was fully screened by intervening rocks and trees from the sea, and could not, therefore, betray their position. Chartres had by great exertion enabled Andrews to present the ladies with bowls of tea,—an unhopèd-for luxury ; and although it had been boiled in a common kettle in handfuls, and then baled into bowls and tin cans, it was declared to be the most refreshing and delicious beverage they had ever tasted—yet they had been bred in luxury !

“ We are now once more collected and armed for your protection, ladies,” said Chartres. “ The only landing-place is difficult

of access, and proper measures have been taken for defending it ; but we do not apprehend an attack even to-morrow, as the enemy have again suffered severely from a parting broadside. We heard their cries at the cove whilst you slept."

"We will not speak of all your generous care of us, Mr. Chartres. You know how fully we appreciate it ; but permit me to ask, is there not some danger of an attack from the natives of the coast ? They will have probably been drawn hither by so much firing. You have satisfied me that we can have nothing to fear from the pirates before to-morrow ; but excuse me, my dear sir, I do not feel quite at ease about the natives. May they not be lurking near us, and watching all our movements ?"

"We have every reason to believe," replied Chartres, "that there can be few natives in so barren a district, and they would almost certainly be without fire-arms, and more or

less dependent upon the nearest Portuguese settlement, with which we may hope to establish a communication to-morrow; for they, too, must have heard the guns. Depend upon it, we have more to hope for than to fear from natives, but as far as we can discover, there is no access to this spot from the interior but by one small tortuous ravine, or dry watercourse. I shall proceed to examine this in both directions. Rushton will remain with you till I return."

Chartres rose and quitted the cavern hastily, as if he had apprehended a remonstrance against his undertaking so laborious a task, after his recent exertions.

"Your friend, Mr. Rushton, is a wonderful man," said the lady. "So considerate for others, so regardless of himself. I never beheld such a triumph of noble generous feelings over bodily infirmity. He really seems to have become incapable of fatigue. Heaven forbid that he should suffer for his goodness to

us. I would fain have stopped him now, but he was gone."

"He is indeed an altered man, madam. I can scarcely credit the evidence of my senses when I see Chartres making such violent and continued exertions, as if it were natural and habitual to him to do so."

"'Tis wonderful," added Norah, "to see him suddenly step forth to take the lead amongst a host of brave and generous men; not presumptuously, but as if assuming a natural right, which no one disputes, even in matters relative to the ship. In my ignorance, I saw nothing in this noble-minded man but an indolent, self-indulgent valetudinarian, though always kind-hearted, and a most perfect gentleman; but I have discovered my mistake."

"Very happy to find you in such excellent quarters, ladies," said Captain Timmins, entering the cavern. "We should have made a bad hand of it without you and your friend, Mr. Rushton, though our will was good."

The ladies were delighted to see the worthy Captain again; and inquired after the rest of their brave friends.

“All well,” he replied, “and we have found fresh water,—an object of vital importance to us, about which I had very painful doubts,—but Yarker is a clever indefatigable fellow. Our means of subsistence are now ample, and we are fully prepared to meet any attack, though I have little apprehension upon that point. You may at least rest in peace and full security for this night, and I anticipate much more from fatigue and discomfort for you to-morrow, than from the pirates, or any effort they can make.”

“I feel perfect confidence for the night,” replied Mrs. Darcie. “But do you think it probable that the pirates will attack us to-morrow, after the noble conduct of yourself and your gallant crew to-day?”

“It is certainly possible,” answered the Captain, “but I think not probable; but in

so strong a position we should be certain to beat them off, with little risk to ourselves; as we should fire from behind rocks upon undisciplined men, crowded together in small boats. They could not long sustain so unequal a contest, especially after having already lost so many of their men. They will most probably plunder, and perhaps set fire to my dear old ship; and then return to Madagascar to recruit their numbers."

"I hope," said Norah, "that Darby and the Petrel will meet them. Do you think, Captain Timmins, that if the Petrel should catch them, our friends will learn from them where we are?"

But before the Captain had answered a question, which had somewhat puzzled him, Chartres returned.

"We are delighted to see you again," said Mrs. Darcie cordially. "I cannot but fear that you may suffer from such continued exertions. We are grateful, most grateful."

Chartres seemed much moved. "We have ascertained," he said, recovering, "that the dry watercourse, which forms the only approach to this cavern from the interior, is so rugged and tortuous as to be almost impracticable. It has cost us much labour to examine it, for a short distance, in both directions. Such precautions have been taken, and your security for the present is so perfect, that I submit, my dear madam, to your own excellent judgment the incalculable importance of retiring to rest, with entire confidence in that heavenly protection which has carried us safely through such a day as the last. I shall have the honour to be your guard for the first part of the night. Armed sentinels will be placed on both sides of the entrance of the cavern, and a chain of sentinels will preserve our communications with our main force at the cove, who guard the beach and the boats. The slightest alarm would bring them here in a few minutes."

The gentlemen left the cavern. The en-

trance to it was closed by a canvas screen; and after a short conversation respecting the dreadful events of the day, contrasted with the peaceful prospects of the night, during which Norah still harped upon Darby and the Petrel, she joined her mother in a short but fervent prayer, and was soon after asleep,—as little Emma, exhausted by fatigue, had long been.

Mrs. Darcie looked fondly upon the precious objects of her anxiety, revolving in her mind, with pious gratitude, the various circumstances of their recent dangers and escapes, with all their horrors.

How entirely do the good and evil around us, like the material objects which we look upon, owe the form and colour which they assume in our eyes, to the light in which they may chance to be viewed. But this is a subject far too deep and too important to be treated of incidentally.

The calm unrepining submission with which the pure and lofty spirit, whose firmness is



based upon the Rock of Faith, can bow to God's will under great and severe trials; whilst it lends comfort and consolation unspeakable to the sufferer, presents an example and a lesson to the wicked.

Here was a mother, highly gifted and accomplished, accustomed to all the blessings and enjoyments so freely lavished upon one who was the grace and ornament of a polished circle, and who was accustomed to behold the daughters she so tenderly loved, objects of respect and admiration to all around her; all prompt to shield them from the shadow of evil, however slight or transient.

A few, a very few days had elapsed since all had been thus; and now those cherished objects of her love were sleeping at her feet, worn out with toil and terror, in a wild cavern, on a barbarous and desolate coast. Their ship was a wreck, in the hands of ruthless pirates, from whose horrid grasp they themselves had with such difficulty

escaped, after having endured very many hours of almost hopeless misery. And now the utmost consolation of the generous and devoted protectors, whom it had pleased God to raise up for them in their hour of danger, had only been able to assure them of safety from violence for the remainder of that night, if, as they trusted, there should be no attack from natives ; when they had the means of sustaining life in this desert for some weeks, but no certain place of refuge.

The unhappy mother trembled as she looked down upon the objects of her affection, who, with the happy facility of youth and innocence, had sunk for the moment into enviable unconsciousness of past or threatening evils.

The tears, which now flowed fast, in some degree relieved her. Prayer, fervent earnest prayer, calmed her agitated mind.

“ From dangers far more imminent we have been this day almost miraculously delivered !

and shall I not trust, implicitly trust, that same Almighty power! Ought I not to try to recruit my exhausted strength, during the short interval of peace and safety vouchsafed me, that I may be enabled to support the toils and dangers of to-morrow!" Again she knelt, "God's will be done," she said, and stretched by the side of her cherished darlings, the blessing of sleep was shared by the anxious mother.

All was soon still and quiet throughout the little post. On each side of the entrance to the cavern which sheltered and concealed them was an armed sentinel; Chartres, fatigued beyond his powers of endurance, yet determined to place himself between his valued charge and the possibility of danger, wrapped his grey cloak around him, placed his loaded pistols by his side, and laid himself on the bare ground across the entrance to the cavern, in utter forgetfulness of all his maladies, real or imaginary.

Captain Timmins and his officers had established themselves in the place so lately vacated by the ladies, which overlooked the whole cove and the sea-approach to it. Here they rested and refreshed themselves after their anxious and perilous day's work.

“What are those black devils about now, on board the old ship?” said the Captain, starting from his seat, and listening attentively; “this is no longer the sound of drunken rioters. Hark, Turnbull! it sounds more to me like a desperate fray, with horrid shrieks and yells.”

“These are death-cries, sir, if ever I heard one. The villains are mad drunk, and cutting each other's rascally throats, to save us the trouble.”

“Who knows, Captain Timmins,” added Yarker, for they had become greatly excited by the continued shrieks and cries which had so suddenly arisen on board the Thames, “who knows, sir, but we may retake the ship

from those beggarly niggers to-morrow, after all; and make some of them dance upon nothing at the yard-arm of the jolly old ship, wreck as the thieves have made of her.

“That thought of yours, sir,” said the Doctor, “of leaving the cabin lighted up, and an abundance of wine and spirits placed ready for these wretches, has produced wonders. That they have been fighting furiously amongst themselves there can be no doubt. The shrieks and yells are dying away; and Mr. Yarker’s hope of retaking the ship to-morrow, may yet be realized.”

All was once more perfectly still in the wreck.

“These rocks,” said the Captain, “which secure us from the observation of the pirates, do also unluckily prevent the possibility of our seeing the old ship. I’d give a good deal to know what has been going on there for the last hour; but at any rate, there can now be no fear of their attacking us to-night. So we

must have a little talk about to-morrow, and settle our plans."

"We were lucky," said Turnbull, "to find such a place as this so close at hand, where they could not see us. Any considerable distance would have added greatly to the fatigue of our men, and would have risked a separation, which might have been fatal to us all."

"Can you judge of the effect of the broadside you fired into the schooner, as she came alongside the raft?" asked the Captain.

"Why, they came on," replied the Chief-Mate, "screaming, and chattering like as many baboons. Their deck was covered with the noisy niggers, as thick as bees in a hive; I could see them well. The guns which could not be enough depressed to strike their boats, at the raft, were exactly at the right level for the schooner's deck; and the jabbering villains were not more than two fathoms from the muzzles when we slapped the whole lot of grape, and langridge, right into the thick of 'em,

the moment we felt the schooner strike the raft. The sudden change of their senseless chatter, into shrieks and groans, was frightful : you must have heard them here."

"Lots of 'em got it," added Yarker, "and the wounded are, as John Chinaman says, 'spoiled' for they have no doctors, and like heathen dogs as they are, no man cares for his messmate. Every body looks to his own wounds as well as he can. We took time to make our aim sure, but we did not stop to ask any questions afterwards. It was high time to be off. They didn't find any difficulty in crossing the raft, for the old ship's deck was beginning to swarm with the thieves, before we could get clear of her ; and we took care to make no noise, though they made noise enough, the villains !"

"Shocking," said the Doctor, "no one to look to the wounded : that is terrible."

It was now agreed, that although there could be no attack during the night, they must

expect the enemy to make an attempt upon them in the morning when they should have slept off their debauch; but all felt certain that in such an advantageous position, they could repel them with little danger.

“I have no faith, Turnbull,” said the Captain, after an interval of silence, “in finding Portuguese settlements near us. Yarker or you must start at night-fall to-morrow, in the yawl, for Mozambique. The land-wind will carry you out of sight before daylight, and you may get there in eight-and-forty hours. We shan’t take much harm here, for a few days. The pirates, after plundering the old ship, may possibly burn her, and finding they can make no hand of us, must return to Madagascar to recruit their numbers, for we have thinned them out a little. The Governor of Mozambique will send a Government vessel for us, if there should be no English man-of-war there. We know the Petrel is in these seas; she may be at Mozambique.”



The watches were now set, and all those off duty were soon asleep. And as we scorn to compromise the veracity of our narrative, we are compelled to admit, much as we admire and esteem the whole gallant party, that even those, who with arms in their hands, and unflinching courage in their hearts, had undertaken the important duty of watching for the general safety, after an honest, but vain contest, with the drowsiness engendered by long and severe toil and excitement, gave way, one by one, till they, too, all slept.

Nothing could have been more judicious than were the arrangements made for the security of their position, and the safety of their interesting passengers; no men more devoted to the execution of those arrangements than the gallant fellows to whom they had been committed. But, alas! to plan is one thing, to execute is another. Human nature, in its best and bravest form, has its weaknesses: thews and sinews, however robust,

possess but limited powers of action or of endurance ; and within one short half hour after the close of Captain Timmins' lately recorded conference with his officers, the fatigue, induced by long and unwonted toil, with the presumed absence of all immediate danger, aided by the soothing influence of a calm, still, soft night, had, as already shown, proved irresistible to all.

It was not yet midnight, and all both within and without the cavern slept profoundly ; and so entirely did silence pervade the whole surrounding scene, that the crackling and hissing of the green and gum-bearing branches, which had been largely heaped upon the fire, could have been distinctly heard at a considerable distance, whilst a bright flickering flame glanced upon the broad surface of the canvas-screen which closed the entrance to the cavern, and secured its privacy.

Suddenly the profound stillness was broken by a scream of savage triumph ; a rush of

numbers at the frail covering of the cavern's mouth instantaneously followed. The glare of the firelight had rendered it, unfortunately, conspicuous amongst so many dark and gloomy objects. The sentinels, betrayed by the glare, were immediately stabbed, one of them mortally ; the other, more fortunate, though severely wounded, shot his assailant dead and raised an alarm.

Chartres, extended across the entrance to the cave, being wrapped in a dark cloak, had fortunately escaped observation, and as the assailants rushed pell mell into the cavern the foremost of them fell over him. Thus rudely awakened, with the shouts of his wounded sentinel ringing in his ears, he caught up his pistols and shot two of the invaders who were struggling on the ground, and in the act of rising. He then sprang to his feet with perfect presence of mind, notwithstanding the suddenness of the desperate conflict in which he found himself so strangely involved.

Resolved to sell his life dearly in defence of his helpless friends, he was not without hope, that single-handed as he was, he might still protect them till assistance should arrive from the cove. This passed through Chartres' mind with the rapidity of lightning, but before he could even draw his cutlass from its sheath, a second rush of invaders overwhelmed him: he was struck apparently lifeless to the ground.

Mrs. Darcie, and her daughters, awakened by the crash of fire-arms so near to them, and terrified by the wild tumult around, felt that they were lost, and clung to each other in an agony of terror.

"At least we shall die together, darlings," said the heart-stricken mother. "May God be our helper!"

Her own terrors were deeply aggravated, by a painful conviction, that the noble, the generous Chartres had already fallen in their defence.

The exulting ruffians, who now crowded

the cavern, impeded each other's movements. They had no settled plan of action, no understanding with each other, no leader ; it was each man for himself alone. Actuated by hopes of plunder, not knowing whom or what they might find.

But with the fall of the canvas-screen, a glimmering of fire-light had entered, and soon they recognized their trembling prey; shouts of terrible delight burst forth. All claimed the prize, knives were drawn, and a fierce conflict ensued between the boldest of the assailants, precious moments were lost—the fight was ended. Impious hands still reeking with the blood of their comrades, were raised to seize their horrified victims. No Chartres had appeared ; their last earthly hope had failed, and their only prayer was for instant death.

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